ONE MAN'S LIFE

HERBERT QUICK

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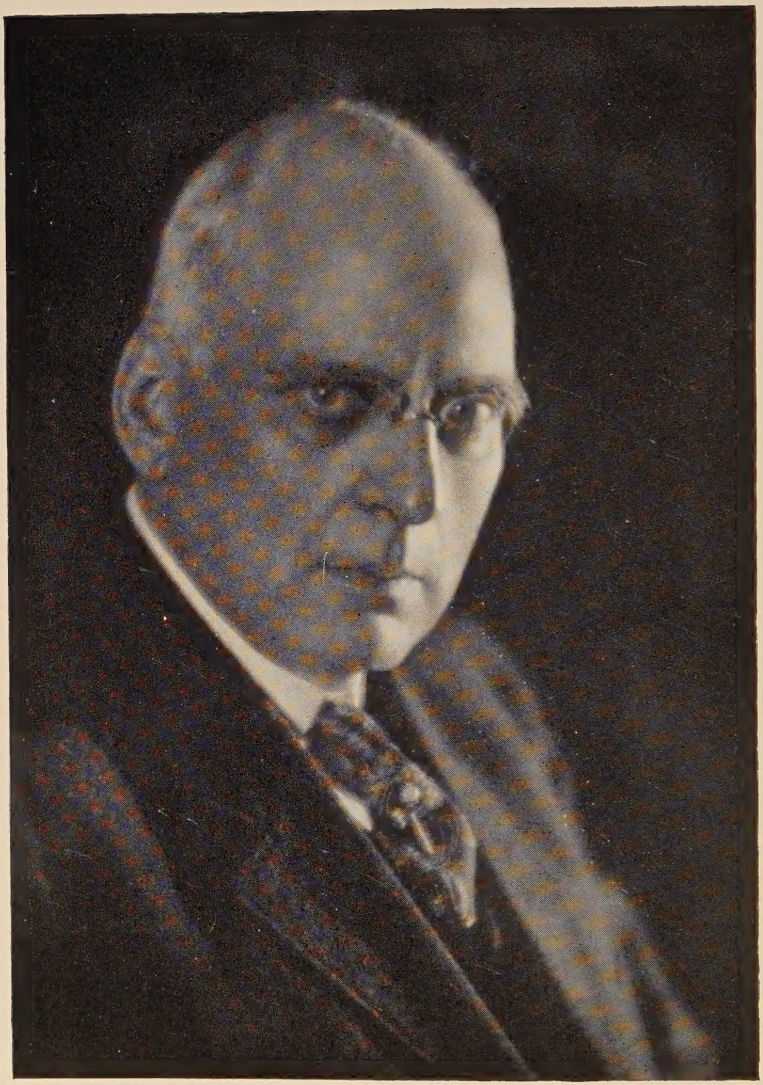

Herbert Quick.

ONE MAN'S LIFE

An Autobiography by

HERBERT QUICK

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

40172

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ONE MAN'S LIFE

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CHAPTER I

ROYAL ANCESTRY—OF COURSE

In spite of the fact that there are very few autobiographies extant, compared with the vast number that have been published, which are worth the paper on which they are printed, there is an urge upon many otherwise well-instructed people to commit them. I wonder why. It may be the work of the great adversary of man tempting us through our vanity; or perhaps it is the fact that a really good autobiography always fills a need on the part of the reading public and becomes in the hands of posterity a mine of—more or less—precious metal. There is much to be said on both sides. A perfect biography of the man who can scarcely read, working to-day in my orchard, a person who has never been fifty miles from the mountain farm on which he was born, would be a priceless treasure. So would be a similar story of the life of almost any one else. The thing, however, which should throw into a panic the person undertaking such a task is the daunting fact that none of the persons mentioned could write such an autobiography.

Neither can I. But having passed through an his-

toric epoch such as none except mid-western Americans have, in all the world's history, ever seen, having moved in many circles and observed numerous events, having had a thought or so occasionally about these things, and being persuaded thereto by those willing to take the responsibility of publication—and it may be by the adversary and the argument of possible utility mentioned above—I am celebrating my sixty-third birthday by this beginning of my memoirs. To him who says I am old enough to know better, I can only suggest that he leave my reply to the event. The statistics are all in favor of his contention. The panic is mine.

I was born at midnight or thereabouts on the night of October 23, 1861. There was so much doubt as to whether it was the twenty-third or the twenty-fourth that when I was about fifteen I went into the matter as thoroughly as possible and decided that it was the twenty-third. In a matter of so much importance, the bad time kept by the clocks in the frontier cabins in Iowa in those days was a matter of some embarrassment; but the nearness to midnight has been useful to such astrologers as have cast my horoscope, in which they have, so far, been at least seventy-five per cent. wrong. The place was in Grundy County, Iowa, though Hardin County was just across the imaginary line, which afterward became a road. The house has long since disappeared; but there was a huge glacial boulder close by, which, when I saw it in boyhood, looked as if it might be carved into a durable monument. On land which has sold for from four to five hundred dollars an acre within the past few years, one can scarcely expect that the boulder has been

allowed to remain. If it has yielded to dynamite, the spot is unmarked. But the same thing is true of the place of Homer's birth.

At any moment after I was born, my mother would unhesitatingly have died to preserve me had it been required of her. I never for a moment doubted this. Yet, as she told me in after years, I was not a child whose coming was desired. A swarm of children was not looked upon as a blessing in the circle into which I was born. I should not mention this, notwithstanding that I think it is a matter of interest, were it not for its social and historic significance. For it was typical of the reaction to child-bearing which had begun to prevail among the descendants of our American pioneers.

It is, in fact, a part of a matter which has been much debated by sociologists. It was General Francis A. Walker, I believe, who taught us that the people of the original American stock (such as my family) ceased to have large families because of the fact that the swarm of immigrants from Europe in the first half-century of our national life crowded the Americans out of the unskilled occupations. The Americans, he argued, refused to produce children to compete with the Irish and Germans and other European immigrants. He believed that America would have had as many inhabitants at the time when he wrote, if immigration had been shut off when we separated from England, as it actually did possess; but they would have been of pre-revolutionary stock. The Americans then on the ground, he believed, would have gone on rearing the old-fashioned families which they raised in our early history.

In this I am sure General Walker was mistaken; and the memories of a boy as to the conversation of women uttered when he was supposed to be too small to understand or remember have significance in this scientific debate—a debate which has in late years gone against the theory I am attributing to Walker. The "Yankee" women (this means those of New England and New York stock) had for decades before I was born been slowly gaining a reputation for parsimony in bestowing on the world the treasures of their progeny. We used to have a neighbor, an Englishman I think, who habitually sneered at the Yankees for this. "Give me a good old-fashioned family of ten or twelve," he would say, "and not a 'Yankee company' of two or three!" Thus he hinted that the Yankees were not really married in the good old-fashioned sense.

Let Americans of the old stock look up their family records prior to 1840 and see how the facts support this Britisher's remark, whether the sneer be justified or not. Most of them will find that about 1840 the sizes of families began to decrease in a manner, and under circumstances which take the phenomenon out of the field of competition with European immigrants. This is surely the case with farmers. To the farmer a family of boys is an economic advantage. The land employs them. They labor without hire. Yet the families of farmers fell off with those of the rest of the population. In my own family my grandparents had families of from ten to fifteen children; and those ten to fifteen scarcely averaged a third as many.

The fact is that these American women had come to regard the bearing of many children as a part of the

primal curse which they were, in large numbers, resolved to avoid. Their conversation among themselves, their advice to their daughters, their whole mental attitude, was against the large family. They recognized no binding force in the command, "Multiply and replenish the earth." They were becoming intelligent. No race ever gained in intelligence amid poverty as did the people of the stream of immigration which for two centuries was engaged in threading the forests, to emerge at last upon the prairies. It kept pace in this with those left behind in the East and Middle States and the South. All over America there was a new attitude toward the large family.

If we had had no immigration, we should not have spread across the continent nor possessed more than half the population we now have.

The principles of population began to be studied in the time of the Reverend Mr. Malthus. His theory that our numbers, like the numbers of any other animal, tend to increase in a geometrical ratio, and to outrun the means of subsistence, is unquestionably a true one. No great thinker since his time, who has really thought on the subject, has doubted the Malthusian theory, save that economic genius, Henry George. George felt rather than thought that there is some counteracting force which surely holds population down to the numbers which the earth can support under conditions of justice. I believe that George entertained some notion that population is really stationary, and that back of this was a religious belief. In his day we had no such wealth of statistical information as now. If he were still with us, I feel certain that he would have long since modified his

views on population, save as to the existence of a principle in human racial development which tends to adjust our numbers to the food-supply. That principle exists in the conflict of large families with the individual development of parents under conditions of a certain enlightenment and of social and economic freedom. The Americans of seventy-five years ago had already begun to put into effect this beneficent preventive check, even before there was any real economic need for it. It was a mingling of a desire to avoid the physical burdens of child-bearing with an ambition to give the children "a better chance" and many other thoughts and instincts. Our grandparents were then showing themselves to be the best-equipped race to occupy a new continent which the world ever saw; for they were, even in advance of any economic pressure worth mentioning, forestalling what Malthus would have called the inevitable era of over-population. If the Chinese, Japanese and Hindus could only reach the same point of adjustment of population to environment which our American ancestors attained three-quarters of a century ago, their economic problems would be solved in a generation or so, and civilization saved the crucial struggle which so many see before us. It is their religions and traditions which account for their fecundity, together with their lack of fundamental enlightenment.

My mother was a typical woman of the old American stock. She told me truly of her attitude as to my coming; but like other American mothers, when the little guest once pulled the latchstring of this world, he received a welcome, a devotion and a wealth of love which could not have been greater if he had answered a want ad.

My ancestors all came to America in colonial times. They were, with one or two exceptions, Dutch, and came to New Amsterdam. The name Quick looks British, but we must blame that to the country schoolteachers, and the possibility of illiteracy among my forebears. The Dutch form of the name must have been "Kwik." It means the same in Dutch as in English. I have never investigated the matter as to what sort of people came to New Amsterdam and went out to develop farms, or why they came. To avoid the charge of eccentricity, however, I am bound to imply that whatever they were, my ancestors were superior to the rest of them. All the earlier names are lost, to me at least. They seem to have migrated up the Hudson to a point where they were blocked by the great patroons' estates; and there, unwilling to pay rent to those excellent people, the Van Rensselaers, the Livingstons and other landlords, but having their Dutch heads set on getting land of their own, they turned to the left at Kingston; and passing up the Rondout Valley on a line almost parallel to the Hudson which they had ascended, by the time my family's oral history begins, they were established in Orange and Sullivan Counties, New York; Sussex or Passaic County, New Jersey; and even in eastern Pennsylvania.

They and their neighbors had ceased to be Europeans. They had yielded to that environment which has made Americans what they are and America what it is—the frontier. They had hewed their way up the Rondout and Wallkill Valleys and over the watershed from farm to farm, taking generations for the work, clearing the forests, building their cabins, erecting their churches, fighting Indians, slaying game,

planting orchards and fields. All the Dutch left in them was the sturdy character and a somewhat altered language. This was one of the first frontiers in North America.

Readers of history are prone to forget how slowly our forefathers learned to live in the wilds. Sir Walter Raleigh planted two colonies on the Carolina coast. The first came to starvation, and the defeated settlers were rescued and taken back to England. The second, left for three years without supplies, vanished from the face of the earth. Six out of every seven of Jamestown's settlers starved the first winter, and half the Pilgrims in Plymouth did the same. They seem, if that be possible, to have been too dependent on their faith in God. These settlers were helpless even while living by waters teeming with fish, in forests full of game, fruits and nuts, and on fertile land from which to grow food. The Rondout Valley Dutch of a generation or two experience, or the British born in the wilds, would have laughed at the conditions under which the first comers perished.

It takes time to make frontiersmen. We learn of no serious want among the Dutch, and I therefore claim for my ancestors that they were better settlers than the British—who had one quality which made them almost hopeless failures—their pig-headed slowness of adaptation. I have seen the same thing among the English settlers in Alberta and Saskatchewan, and even in Iowa in my own day. Almost hopeless, but not quite; for they possessed also another trait which redeemed those who did not allow themselves to starve—their splendid determination. Enlightened very gradually by their experience in the

New World through the solution of its problems, they staggered palely from winter into spring, better able each season to win through to the next, and were hammered by adversity into the finest people to whom Providence ever gave an empire, especially when given the proper intermixture of Dutch, German and Irish.

Among those Rondout Valley Dutch were my ancestors. They belong to my autobiography, because they bore the cells which make up my body and brain; and they were the first trickle of the human stream which for two centuries seeped slowly through the forests like a flood held back by fallen leaves and brushwood, and at last burst forth in a freshet of men and women on the prairies when I was new. Some fifteen-sixteenths of me is Dutch. How this works out in the matter of chromosomes I have no idea; and must leave the matter, important as it is, to the biologists, merely pausing to notify those whose brains are absorbed in the matter of race that I am Nordic. They will concede that this is a thing which I planned well.

I find on tracing up my paternal line such names as Denis—or Dennis—and Winfield. "Winfield" looks British too, but it is Dutch. How my forebears spelled it—such of them as were able to spell it at all—I do not know, but they pronounced it "Winfield." I have seen a Low Dutch book in which the battleground on which Arminius, in the year 9 A. D., destroyed the legions of Varus, is called Winfield, or the Field of Victory. Mr. Creasy, who puts this great slaughter among the Fifteen Decisive Battles of the World, by some strange oversight fails to mention the deeds of

valor done by my ancestors in that engagement by which they must have got their name. As for some of them, their names were Dennis. On my mother's side, we have the names of Krom, or Krum—now corrupted to Crumb—Van de Marck, or Vandemark, Rapelje, Koms and Coleman. Coleman is Irish. Bardeen, or Bardin, and McAndree, or McKendry, are other names in the maternal line, which run back to New England, I believe, and away from the Low Countries.

The Irish ancestry is derived through John Coleman, who was in the British forces in New York in colonial days. He was a soldier of the king—or queen; I am a little uncertain which—and met and courted a Dutch girl, Hannah Koms, as is the soldier's way. He little knew, which is also the soldier's way, what he was doing for me. He, aided by those dim-seen Bardeens and McAndrees, has given me a non-Dutch strain—preponderantly Celtic, I think—which I feel sure has much the same effect as a little yeast in grape juice—it has acted as a ferment and perhaps communicated a kick. I hope the Volsteadists will not accept this statement as an admission against interest. Hannah Koms and John Coleman were married. He went away on some expedition to attack Havana—or it may have been Louisburg—where, having his leg shot off by a cannonball à la Ben Battle, he was carried aboard a hospital ship, got gangrene in the wound and was buried at sea. So much for the delay in the invention of aseptic surgery. A son named for him, but whom he never saw, was born to him after his departure; and there was a John Coleman in the family in every generation down to and including my maternal grandfather, whom I dimly remember.

John and Catherine Coleman, Maternal Grandparents.

Catherine, Half-sister of Herbert Quick.

Uncle Matthew Coleman.

Taken at the time of the journey from Wisconsin to Iowa.

The first John Coleman has had a very brilliant military career since his death. He is now, in the opinion of the genealogists, an officer. In fifty years more, I feel sure he will be the commander of his expedition, even though only a common soldier when he sailed away. Moreover, Hannah Koms was a member of the royal family of Holland. Her first colonial ancestor was of royal birth and was secretary to old Governor Peter Stuyvesant of New Amsterdam. Some branches of my family have found out this gratifying fact through the labors of the tree specialists, of whom, more than of any other scholars of whom I know, it may be said that they aim to please.

When the writer meanly suggested, on hearing of this, that there was no royal family of Holland at that time; and that a member of any great family who was brought down to the position of working in any subordinate capacity for that passionate old tyrant, Peter the Headstrong, must have done something perfectly terrible in Holland, my contribution to the investigation of family glories was received with such ill-favor that further information was denied me.

The life of the skeptic is not always an easy one. Therefore I have adopted a policy of believing henceforth everything the family ascertains. I believe that we are descended from the royal family of Holland, whether there was one or not. I believe John Coleman was a colonel, anyhow. I believe that my father's grandmother's people received the name of Winfield because they so slaughtered Varus' troops in the Teutoburger Wald as to wring from the Emperor Augustus the cry, "Varus, Varus, give me back my legions!" But Varus could not give them back, because Arminius

and the Winfields had got them. And whatever of good report is offered for acceptance in the future regarding my great forebears, I now pledge myself to believe, and I shall reject every calumny which links my blood with evildoers—unless aristocratic ones—or with mere hard-working, industrious folk who simply earned their living and paid their debts.

This confession of present and pledge of future faith is almost a necessity for every one, as a concession to that universal weakness of mankind—ancestor worship. I suspect that the average man is as well born as the average king—which is saying mighty little. But ancestor worship demands its fables.

I know of one family descended from a man who was convicted of the embezzlement of the pay of soldiers in the Revolutionary War, and armed with a wooden sword was drummed out of camp in disgrace with his face to his horse's tail. Yet, his descendants have built up a heroic legend of his great services to his country, and are among the most enthusiastic joiners of leagued descendants.

Yet, ancestor worship with us is at most a venial, if sometimes a trying weakness. It is among our Asiatic brethren that it becomes a racial calamity and a world peril. For ancestors who are really worshiped demand progeny to keep the fires burning on the altars, and to offer sacrifices to the deified. The great evil of Asia is the birth-rate. Redundant population fills empires with people whose status is from every view-point of well-being far below that of the beasts of the field, and threatens other continents with invasions and other nations with wars which promise to

be wars of extermination. And but a little thought leads to the conclusion that if these races were put in possession of the coveted lands, the benefit to them would, in the absence of a lowered birth-rate, be merely temporary, while it would wipe out the hope of the world which lies with the continued existence of those races which adapt their increase in people to the possibilities of production. Our own mild worship of our ancestors is rather amusing. It was Henry George who pointed out the fact that, while one may have no descendants, each of us certainly had two parents, and in the absence of interconnected lines of descent it is a mathematical certainty that one's ancestors of a few hundred years ago were hundreds of thousands in number. Our ancestral host runs back through history in a fan-shaped chart, which finally must take in about all the society of a not very remote past. To quote a once-familiar poem, with a slight alteration:

> "Depend upon it, my race-proud friend,
> If you will your family thread ascend,
> You will find it waxed at the other end,"

not only by "some plebeian vocation," but by almost every condition of human life. You and I are descended from almost everybody of our respective races who lived ten thousand years ago—including the forefathers of those who compose the royal family of Holland as well as other royal families, the Winfields who fought so well in A. D. 9, and the Colemans themselves. As to many of them, their names will have been Dennis. I suppose that no better racial line can be found than that of folk descended from a peasant ancestry in northern Europe, who plunged into the

American wilderness in the seventeenth century, and modified by the frontier environment in which the weaklings were largely eliminated, emerged upon the prairies two hundred years later. Having thus betrayed my own peculiar form of ancestor worship, perhaps I had better cease philosophizing.

CHAPTER II

WE DEVELOP NEW YORK

All my ancestors then living took part in settling the second great frontier of New York. They had acquired the traits which urged them from one struggle with the wilderness to another, and migrated to the lake country of what they used to call York State almost as soon as the news reached them of the conquest of the Six Nations by the ruthless and barbarous expedition of General Sullivan in 1779—for which he received the thanks of Congress. Simeon Quick, my grandfather, settled in Tompkins County, some miles south of Ithaca. The Krums and Colemans located west of there, and lived near Palmyra when Joseph Smith filled that countryside with his stories of visions, visitations of angels, and of the book of gold plates on which the characters were inscribed, which, when translated, from "the reformed Egyptian tongue" by means of the supernatural spectacles with the lenses, one of which was Urim and the other Thummim, made up the Book of Mormon. I have heard my Grandmother Coleman, then Catherine Krum, say that one of the Prophet's early converts was the husband of her cousin, whose name I forget, now, save that I think it was Mary something. It is a family legend that for some reason, perhaps it was during the "persecution" which took place then, the book of gold

plates was for one night at least hidden in Cousin Mary's house concealed in a grain sack.

"If I had been in Mary's place," I have heard my grandmother say as she told this story, "I'd have looked at that book!"

I have no doubt she would have taken a peep at it. Mary, however, refrained, and thus failed of being numbered among the cloud of witnesses on both sides of the case for and against the Mormon church.

The fact that my ancestors moved to central New York at this time is of small consequence, but the migration itself is historic. It was one of those shootings-forth which made America. My Grandmother Coleman remembered that while her family were on the road through the forests from Orange County to their new home, they stayed overnight at a farm where the family kept slaves. This, remember, was in the state of New York.

The new frontier was pierced through by a great highway, the Erie Canal. It was no longer Dutch, but a far-flung congeries of settlements in which Dutch, New England Yankees and an infusion of immigrants from Europe existed in that condition of attrition and fusion out of which alone Americanization has ever come. There has been a progressive failure in the process of Americanization in our history, in the exact measure that the frontier has been replaced by settled and developed conditions. The frontier has been the great Americanizing influence. Something may possibly be originated to take its place, but we have not yet invented or developed it; and we shall do well to pause in taking in immigrants who settle in cities in Little Europes and Asias and,

Painted by N. C. Wyeth

THE BOY VANDEMARK RETURNS TO HIS HOME NEAR THE ERIE CANAL.

preserving all their alien characteristics, become merely hotbeds of ancient enmities plus new ones developed in the new soil, until we have found a substitute for the frontier as a solvent of alien characteristics and a propagating force for our own. Not that I would discuss the question of whether ours are better than theirs, any more than I would debate as to whether gasoline is better than flame. The point is that the two will not mix without danger of an explosion.

The human ingredients began mixing successfully in western New York, but the wanderlust did not permit my family on either side to remain. My mother's people went for a year to Canada, where she was born; and then to Ohio, stopping a few years at Conneaut, which was then nicknamed Little Hope—why, I know not. The next step was to Wisconsin, where they landed at Southport, now Kenosha. My father, still a stranger to my mother, left the family home; and because he was a skilful sawyer, having learned in his father's little sawmill on what I believe was called Six-Mile Creek, south of Ithaca, went to Muskegon, Michigan, at which place the onslaught was beginning on the great pineries of that peninsula. There he heard the call of the newer sawmills at Eau Claire, Wisconsin. But the magnetism of the new soil was too strong to be resisted, and he somehow turns up in Dodge County, near Horicon.

The two lines of descent met and touched in 1857. They met in the forest region, through which they had been for two centuries or more pressing westward. They are examples. They are very significant to America and Americans, and to the world. They

were not yet out of the woods, however. In the spring of 1857 they began their last long trek to a new and a different world. They turned their faces to the west which they had for generations seen at sunset through traceries of the twigs and leafage of the primal forest, and finally stepped out into the open, where God had cleared the fields, and stood at last with the forests behind them, gazing with dazzled eyes sheltered under the cupped hands of toil out over a sea of grassy hillocks, while standing in the full light of the sun. It was the end of Book One of our history.

CHAPTER III

THE FATHER I CHOSE

THERE were three ox-drawn wagons. One was that of my grandfather, the last John Coleman, with his wife, born Krum, and named Catherine, and his two grown-up daughters. The second belonged to my Uncle Matthew Coleman, with his wife and their little girl. At the beginning of the voyage of the prairie schooners—as they came afterward to be called—my mother rode with her parents, accompanied by her young daughter. My father's wagon carried his three boys, the eldest some thirteen or fourteen years old. While in mid-voyage my father and mother were married. Our family consisted therefore of what we used to call three sets of children, at least after my three full sisters and myself had put in our appearances.

Each of the previous marriages had been dissolved by divorce. And it is significant of the characters of my parents that never in the whole history of the family did I become aware of any slightest feeling on the part of my brothers and sisters that any partiality was shown by father or mother as between these offspring of former marriages or in favor of the later one. Perhaps the highest attribute of the human character is the sense of justice, and the ability to deal out in just measure not only the appearance of justice but the actual goods of affection. Instead of being a source

of jealousy and strife in our family, the presence of these older half brothers and sisters became to us all a beautiful lesson in righteousness, the more beneficent because nothing was ever said or—so far as I ever knew—thought about it.

My father was a typical Dutchman of medium stature, and in his youth an able wrestler. Perhaps the fact that he had one brown eye marks a departure from type. They knew their Mother Goose in Tompkins County in the eighteen-twenties, for his playmates used to hector him by singing:

> Mary and Simmie went through the rye
> And found a little boy with one brown eye.

After we had begun to read good books aside from the Bible, my mother always insisted that there was much in the head of our house which resembled that great-grandfather of Diedrich Knickerbocker, who, on taking the contract to build a church in Rotterdam, took three months of smoking for pure consideration of the work; then three more in knocking his head and breaking his pipe against every church on a circuitous journey from Rotterdam through Amsterdam, Delft, Haarlem, Leyden and The Hague and back to Rotterdam; then three more in walking and navigating and climbing to attain coigns of vantage for contemplating the site of the still unbuilt church; and at last, having smoked three hundredweight of tobacco, and traveled and thought and contemplated and just looked for full twelve months, and filled the good Rotterdammers with the fidgets, pulled off his coat and five pairs of breeches and laid the cornerstone of the church, which, according to the great historian of New Amsterdam,

"was so conveniently constructed that all the zealous Christians of Rotterdam prefer sleeping through a sermon there than to any other church in the city."

Father had the true Dutch deliberation in decision, though in his physical motions he was vigorous and athletic. In fact he was always a little uneasy when called to exercise judgment, and seemed to feel a great relief when he could be discharged of the duty of thinking and allowed to wreak his vigor on something in manual labor. I remember that when he had opened up a prairie farm and sold it at the tiptop of a land boom, making the only money he ever had, and was offered a beautiful tract much larger at what we now should call pre-war prices, he hesitated, felt that he ought to examine the proposed purchase, though there was no half section of anything but nearly perfect land within miles of it, which he well knew, failed to make the purchase, and lost the chance to gain what in those days was considered a fortune. My mother said that Martin should have laid his cornerstone without taking so long to look over the site of the church. His edifice of modest competence was not built.

It is a significant part of my family life that I never saw my father read a book, a magazine or a newspaper. I doubt whether he ever read the written contracts or promissory notes which he signed. As a child, I never connected him with the act of reading; and if I had been asked as to whether or not he could read, I should probably have answered in the negative; until one day when I had won a prize in our primitive district school, I proudly took the book home and showed it to him. To my astonishment he read the

legend on the back: *The Iron Horse, or Life on the Line,* by R. M. Ballantyne. Father could read! Not only that but he could pronounce that hard word "Ballantyne."

Once, he told me, he had been "all wrapped up in his studies," in a school as primitive as mine, I suppose, back in Tompkins County; but—this I infer from the context of his life history as it is imperfectly known to me—he was married to a strangely constituted girl when he was eighteen years old or so, and the rest of his life became a tragic and savage struggle with poverty, domestic infelicity, the support of annual increments to his family, the pioneer life with its fevers and agues and brutal labors. He acquired a habit of hopelessness. What was there for him in Plato and the swing of the Pleiades, the long reaches of the peaks of song, or even of the common uninteresting book or paper? He worked from dawn to dusk, and nightly fell into a bed of weariness. Some martyrdoms seem rather inconsequential things in comparison with his life for more than a third of a century. Yet even this does not quite explain to the mind of his son his complete abandonment of the printed page. It is one of the wonders of my life that, so far as I know, my father never read anything. But he was an avid and appreciative listener to things read aloud in the family circle. After all, while reading maketh a full man, the question may often well be asked, Full of what?

He was a Baptist and I think of that strict Calvinistic school popularly and irreverently dubbed Hardshells. That is, he adhered to the supremely logical and, it seems to me, absurd Genevan system of dispos-

ing of us all for eternity. He had been a communicant of the Baptist Church at Candor, New York—I believe—where he was also chorister; for he had a magnificent barytone voice, and sang hymns and songs in the old Jubilee and the Carmina Sacra in a style which I can not account for, it was so plangently effective. Yet long before I came on the scene, he had ceased to go to church. My mother, a devout Methodist, was troubled, I am sure, at times by his latitudinarian conversation, his use when exasperated of such awful language as "By thunder!" "Gosh blast it!" and "Gimini scribes!"—objurgations quite as bad as Mr. Peggotty's "I'm gormed!" and his occasional taking the name of the devil in vain. She finally joined the Baptist Church in Steamboat Rock, Iowa; but her diplomatic apostasy from Methodism failed of its sacred object.

Father was not drawn back into the communion. Perhaps he missed the Calvinism, or objected to missionaries, or, as I have always thought, he had become skeptical. But when, after I had grown up and gone from home, and father neared the end of his life, Win McClure, an old friend who had become a Y. M. C. A. home missionary, asked my mother whether or not she had talked with Mr. Quick about his soul's welfare, mother asked Mr. McClure to do this; and after the conversation, he reported that he had never conversed with a person who was clearer in his views or more filled with faith. Moreover, he had gone back to the Calvinistic creed of his youth with all its logic and dogma. Really, we never forget. Father's mind had then so far decayed that he could not converse connectedly, and he often failed to recognize his

friends, and even some of his relatives; yet he was perfectly clear in his conviction that "In Adam's fall we sinned all"; that the chief end of man is to "know and do the will of God," and that we are justified by faith.

I wonder if, had Winfield McClure pressed the question, he would not have uncovered in my father's mind the old Calvinistic dogmas of infant damnation and the eternal perdition of most of the human race. Probably he would. Our minds retain whatever has once entered them.

It seems to me of small consequence. My father was in all his Laodicean days, if he lived through such, a Christian. If the poet tells the truth, he was the noblest work of God, for he was an honest man. He was honest with himself. Once an old German immigrant bought our farm, and because of the prevalent financial troubles, could not pay the unpaid balance of the price. Father was obliged to foreclose his mortgage, and thus became the owner of two farms—an immense thing to him. The equity of the courts had given him the land; but it was not the sort of equity which satisfied my father's conscience. He could not rest under the burden of the feeling that Hagen, the German, had lost a farm to Martin Quick. So he let his debtor have another chance; and, after delays, took his little unpaid balance, thus refusing to profit by the default of a stranger and a foreigner. For a rich man to have done such a thing would have seemed easy; but my father was poor in money.

Such acts as this, I like to believe, were what made my father so easy in his mind when Win McClure talked to him that day so near his end. Father applied

Martin Quick, Father of Herbert Quick.
Taken at the time of the journey from Wisconsin to Iowa.

to Mr. Hagen's case, not the Revised Statutes of Iowa, but the older charter of good living, the Golden Rule. His Dutch deliberation did not restrain him from very promptly laying the cornerstone of a fabric much more sacred, I must be permitted to believe, than any church.

CHAPTER IV

MY FRONTIER MOTHER

It was through my mother that I inherit the Irish and other non-Dutch blood. Her father, though three-quarters Dutch, seems to have possessed certain traits of character which—he would have been sorry to admit—came through the Bardeen or McKendry strain. For the Colemans always remembered the Bardeens with apologetic amusement. I wish I could have known these poets and wastrels; but alas! they stayed behind in New York and Wisconsin. I knew only the laughter which was provoked by stories of them; and after all, he who passes down to posterity a few acres, or only a rood or so of the estate called Laughter, has not lived in vain.

The Bardeens seem to have had a flair for satire and the incongruous. One of them, named McKendry Bardeen, I think, but nicknamed Kenny, historicized the gangling height of his brother by saying to him, "You don't need to ask the blessin', Bill; you kin jest reach up an' take it!" One of the Bardeen girls—and I assume that it would be difficult to over-estimate the illiteracy of the family—must have been a mute inglorious Doctor Wolcott as well as a lady cartoonist lost in the wilderness; for she would take a shingle and a bit of charcoal from the fireplace and draw caricatures of her friends and enemies which were

never forgotten by those who were old enough to be ashamed of Tewt—for that is the only spelling of her nickname which expresses the accepted pronunciation of her name. I have heard repeated—with dashes of suppressed words—some of her Rabelaisian satirical verses, never committed to paper. I shall not venture to quote from her Ship of Horicon, the name under which she personified a certain lady of the town of that name, in verse that had a swing and snap and a capacity to cause blushes on the cheek of Modesty which were not far below Burns at his worst. Give me Tewt Bardeen naturalized in a society on which to work, and the right sort of education—I don't know where on earth she would obtain it—and I will make something remarkable of her; and I feel sure that Kenny would be a syndicated columnist at least. The geniuses and scourges buried in the country churchyard of the Elegy are very few in comparison with those who were lost to the rod of empire or the living lyre in the two centuries of suppression of a race in the passage of the forests of North America by our pioneer ancestors. As was said of one who may have been an ancestor of the Bardeens, "I would I were with them wherever they are—for an hour or so, anyhow." They were emphatically no good; but they were amusing.

My Grandfather Coleman might have had an education; but his father, who was what they called well read, insisted that if his children never learned to write, they'd never be arrested for forgery. That is logic. But John, his eldest son, though not sent to any sort of school, gave of his wages as he grew up and sent his brothers and sisters to the schoolmasters most

available. I would rather have for a grandfather the boy who did that than to trace back to the author of Colburn's Arithmetic. Perhaps it was from the common ancestor whom he shared with the McKendrys and Bardeens—however the name should be spelled—that grandfather inherited his love of poetry and his native eloquence. He was a fervent Methodist, though a little lax on passing adverse judgments on sinners. His strong point was his eloquence in prayer, in which he often wrought his hearers up to the religious fervor which thrilled himself; but in his grace at table he always said, "Lord, we acknowledge that to Thee we owe all that we have and am." The Lord overlooked the error in grammar. Let us do likewise.

The Irish blood showed in both my mother and my Uncle Matthew, her brother. He had the black brows and hair and the dark-blue eyes of the Emerald Isle. Moreover, he was a true humorist, putting a little of the Bardeen style in the letters he used to write. My mother looked like an Irish woman. Her hair was dark and her eyes had the very color of the upland violets of the prairie. I think her schooling was protracted over the extreme period of three months; but she did the reading for the family until I took over my part of it. Whatever of the artist I possess in feeling, or the ability to do, I get from my mother, I am sure; and she, I have no doubt, from the same source from which came Cousin Tewt's shingle masterpieces and the swing of her rhymes. I have seen this toil-worn wife of an Iowa frontiersman, when reading some poem, falter from the power in it, and break down in tears at the sheer wonder of its beauty.

When I was a grown-up bumpkin I got hold of *Tristram Shandy* and went into ecstasies over it. Mother read some of the obstetrics of Sterne, and hid the book as an improper thing for visitors to see about the house. One day, concealing the title, I read aloud to her *The Story of Le Fevre.* As I finished the passage: "Nature instantly ebbed again: the film returned to its place; the pulse fluttered, stopp'd—went on—throb'd—stopp'd again—mov'd—stopp'd—Shall I go on? No." I saw my mother's face wet with tears of the divine delight of the pain of appreciation of Art.

"What book is that?" she asked—when she could.

"It is *Tristram Shandy,*" I replied.

"Well," said she, "I guess we needn't hide it any more!"

She had the genius for indignation at injustice or tyranny. When I was something less than five years old, I was sent to school down the road about forty rods to the little white schoolhouse on the headwaters of that Pine Creek from which the town of Eldora has, with the state's aid, now made her beautiful little lake. In my class of two, struggling with words of two and three letters, was a little girl named Maggie Wade, the daughter of a family just then rather poorer than most of the rest of us. Maggie was a naughty little girl. She had been in school two or three terms, but was still sullenly rejecting everything in the Pierian spring except the alphabet. I remember now, as well as though it were yesterday, that the teacher, a young woman noted for her thoroughness in both instruction and discipline, asked Maggie to spell the word "sky."

Maggie couldn't or wouldn't manage it. Then the teacher asked me to spell it for Maggie. I did so. The teacher told Maggie that she ought to be ashamed to have a little boy spell that easy word for her who had only last week learned his letters. Maggie grew sullen and stubborn. She refused to spell the word even when told. She spelled it "ski," "kys" and every other way but the correct one. Then the teacher grew angry. She let Maggie look at the word in the book. Still Maggie refused to spell it.

Then the teacher whipped her. I remember she sent me down to the banks of Pine Creek to get switches, thus giving Maggie time to think it over. When the switches came, the little creature was scourged until she spelled the word. The whistling blows fell cuttingly on the thin, faded and ragged calico over Maggie's back and shoulders until the child finally gave in, her will broken by pain. She was never the same intractable girl afterward. My mother always contended that her will was broken so that she was basically harmed. I do not know. I only know that, at least a fortnight after the whipping, Mrs. Wade came to visit us, bringing her daughter with her. She complained to my mother because the teacher had whipped Maggie so hard, and she bared the child's back for inspection.

The willow whip had drawn great welts across the back and shoulders. These had risen, turned red, and after two weeks were still purple, with greenish borders. My mother dilated with indignation.

"If that was my child," said she, her eyes blazing, "I'd—I'd—" and then she hesitated for a word—"I'd raise blazes with her! She and I couldn't stay in the

same school district! A man that would whip a slave like that ought to be hung!"

And she would have raised blazes with the teacher. She never did protest against any punishment which my three sisters or I received, and I got my share; but this was because the teacher stood *in loco parentis,* and had whippings to deal out if the game required them. Maggie Wade's whipping, however, was a cruel one. In administering it the teacher represented tyranny and cruelty, and my mother's passion against them flamed and burned like a torch. It always did.

If she had any such thing as fear in her make-up, I never saw any indication of it. Nobody, high or low, stranger or neighbor, could make her give ground in any clash of wills. Not that she ever had any such thing as a quarrel. Her sense of personal dignity forbade her bemeaning herself. I think she felt the duty of fearing God, but I doubt if she ever did. She had a sense of God as a being it was nonsense to fear. As for man, he was in her mind not worth fearing.

"I wasn't brought up in the woods to be scared by owls," she would say when intimidation of any sort, personal, social or political, was abroad.

She faced the world with level blue eyes, filled with the love of love, the hate of tyranny and wrong, the glad recognition of whatever beauty—and there was all too little of it—came within her vision. When she grew old and white-haired, there were many men belonging to the intellectual stratum of brain society who had the habit of calling upon Mrs. Quick occasionally, "just to have a talk with her"; and were well rewarded for their pains.

Are these things a proper part of an autobiography? As I see it, they are vital to it. Every man is an organism modified by his environment. My ancestry makes up the thing which is myself. It is nature. The environment is only the milieu which may either abort the organism, be overcome by it, or nourish and develop it. The organism comes from my parents, and theirs, from the spreading fan of progenitors running back to Holland with branches creeping down from England, Scotland and Ireland.

But another reason justifies a study of these people from whom and among whom I was born. They are samples of the society of which I was a part. If they had traits which were worthy of valuation as elements in this nation, they demand recognition, for they plead for the masses everywhere, in all the future, in America and among all peoples. They call for opportunity for every one. Humanity is not a continent of dross with, running through it, an occasional vein of gold. The common earth of mankind is impregnated with the most precious treasures. Give it the right conditions, and it will treat itself. For it is not dead gold or inert jewels. It is vital. It will separate and polish itself by means of its own spirit expressed in human relations.

The tragedy of all societies lies in the suppressions and oppressions which murder the genius of the masses. I believe that in the race of common folk from which I come there was only an ordinary measure of capacity; but that it was enough to have evolved much greatness had it not been dwarfed by conditions. Most people have ancestries equally good—and equally bad. The hope of democracy lies in the

Margaret Coleman Quick, Mother of Herbert Quick.
Taken at the time of the journey from Wisconsin to Iowa.

possibility of a state of things in the future under which we shall not rest our fate upon an occasional giant, but may depend on having a race of full-grown, symmetrically developed men and women, nurtured in the sunlight of justice and equal opportunity, through the operation of which alone we can determine whether this one or that is fundamentally good and useful, whether he may be great or little. Upon the realization of that hope rests the prospect of a better and greater America through all the future. The alternative will be our descent to the hell into which all former civilizations have plunged. I do not believe that a civilization is necessarily doomed to decay, any more than are bees and ants in their collective destinies. The escape from the historic slide is the problem of our age which has better facilities for attacking the riddle than those which any era of the past has brought to man.

CHAPTER V

THE OPEN SKY AT LAST

It was a train of three ox teams which kissed the forests good-by just west of Dubuque in July or late June of that rainy season of 1857. Each wagon represented one of thousands of homes then in process of transplantation. Besides the oxen, each had the foundation of its breeding herds and flocks. They started with the germs of future Iowa agriculture, cattle, hogs and poultry. Imagine it! The fowls were in crates tied to the back of the wagon. The cows were driven in a small herd. Each wagon had its little flock of sheep, too; and when I was a boy there was a carding mill at Iowa Falls to which we took our wool to get it back in the form of rolls, which my mother spun into yarn for stockings and mittens, and which was sometimes somewhere woven into an ugly, heavy, checkered fabric for winter dresses.

Our people started with hogs, too, meaning to drive them with the other live stock; but these useful beasts could not keep up even with ox teams; and streams swollen by rains, and which had to be forded, were too deep and swift for swine, so they were soon sold. The foundation stock of my father's herd of cattle was one cow. Father called her Shakespeare. I remember clearly the mystification of my mind when I began reading great passages of blank verse writ-

ten by our old cow—or, anyhow, with her name signed to them. I found these in that remarkable collection of English selections in the big old McGuffey's Fifth Reader published long before the War between the States. I was then about six or seven years old. The mystification cleared itself up of its own accord, as do most of childhood's puzzles.

I think it was that certain martial note in the poet's name which suggested it to father's mind; for Shakespeare the cow was celebrated for her vigor of character, her ability to hold up her milk whenever things went wrong, her genius as a forager, her breachiness, and the richness of her milk when she chose to part with it. We had her descendants as long as I stayed on the farm; and they all had a touch of Shakespeare's genius. I knew the descendants of those fowls, too. They were huge Asiatics of some cross between what my parents called Shanghais and the Cochin Chinas. With true Dutch conservatism, my father clung to the progeny of Shakespeare and the Shanghais, magnifying their virtues and accepting their many bad qualities, until we boys grew up and partly by argument and partly by stratagem succeeded in introducing new strains of blood.

It was a season remembered for decades as the wet year. The women and children often had to clamber out in the mud and water and rain while the goods were unloaded and carried to firmer ground to lighten the wagons so that doubled teams could drag them on west of the swales. The skies were gloomy. The summer air was often chill, or heated to sultriness as the thunderheads rolled up out of that luring west and broke in thunder and lightning and downpour. Cook-

ing had to be done under these conditions over fires by the roadside. Yet still they pressed on, toward the hope which had preceded their fathers for two hundred years like a pillar of fire by night and of cloud by day.

It now seems like a racial obsession. They traveled by the old Ridge Road which I have described in *Vandemark's Folly,* and traces of which I saw as a boy. What I saw was a rain-washed road, winding along the higher ground of the prairie to avoid as many of the sloughs as could be missed, washed into deep trenches on the hillsides, and passing across levels where the detritus of the wash had formed little fields of deep black loam in the hollows, in which grew the yellow-flowered gum weeds ten feet high, and the saw-bladed slough grass almost equal in height. I have heard my father say that in that summer of 1857 the earth was so wet that springs of living water broke out on the very hillsides and the wagons mired down on steep ground.

You may imagine how these weary, wet and delayed pilgrims felt when they reached the Iowa River at Steamboat Rock, and, seeking to cross it, so as to go on to what they called with cheerful generality, "the Fort Dodge country," found that the river was far out of its banks and too deep and swift to ford or swim; and that the primitive ferry-boat had been cast away somewhere, down by the rocks which gave the town its name. They camped on or near the ground where Root's Hotel was afterward built and, for all I know, still stands. Near it was a stone house.

You think these miserable, wet—and, I have no doubt, dirty—people were avoided and looked upon

askance by the community? You do not know the Mid-West of those days. Instead of being avoided, they were welcomed. There lived in the village one S. B. Cunningham, a man long locally celebrated and known by no other name than Squire. He and others came to our people and urged them to stay at Steamboat Rock. Here, if they only knew it, was the place for which they had started. Any one could see that these people were poor; but that made no difference. Steamboat Rock wanted them to stay. Squire Cunningham owned or controlled the stone house close at hand. He would give them the right to occupy this dwelling for a month, rent free, if they would only stay and give the locality a chance. It sounds humorous in 1925. Everything in their wagons was wet and moldy. They wanted to dry out. They had long arrears of laundry work to take up. They were weary of the everlasting splash, splash of the wheels and of the oxen's feet in the mud. "Weariness" is not a strong enough word to apply to the condition of these women; and they all yearned to see how it would seem to sleep with a roof over their heads. They all wanted to get in out of the wet. So they yielded to the hospitable arguments of the people and stayed in that locality permanently.

If the Iowa River had not been so high, I should have been born somewhere in western Iowa. Perhaps I should have been scalped in the Indian troubles of a few years later. I wonder what that freshet really did to me. We are, as Hawthorne somewhere says, always traveling in the shadow of things which almost happen. To be sure, I was not yet then living; but the principle is the same, I take it.

As I try to recall these circumstances so typical of the process of the peopling of the Mid-West, I find myself without the slightest knowledge as to what my father possessed, aside from a new wife with a daughter some four or five years old, three sons of his own, ranging from fourteen or so down to one just emerging from infancy, his wagon and oxen, the chickens, the sheep and Shakespeare. He must have had a little money, for the family had to live; and it was too late in the season to grow much that year. Such a migration took grim resolution, faith—or blindness.

My grandfather and my uncle had sold small farms in Wisconsin and were able to buy similar tracts in Iowa. They located in Shiloh Township, out in Grundy County, and soon built houses, planted groves and made homes. Their first work, I suppose, was to cut and stack their hay for the winter, and perhaps to plant gardens of such vegetables as had a prospect of maturing before frost. August and September were the best months for haying. The prairie grass made a beautiful hay, so fragrant, so sweet and juicy, so free from mold and dust. Primitive Iowa was a wonderful hay country. The more arid lands west of the Missouri were the grazier's paradise; for the short grass cured on the ground and herds waited to grow fat until the herbage of the plains was dry enough to burn. Our grass was worthless unless it was made into hay before the heavy frost.

Our family left the others in the village and went out to a farm which was usually referred to as the Billy Nicholson Place, but which my father habitually called "the old Doubting Castle." I never saw it, but I heard it discussed frequently. This was a log house.

Too bad, but I wasn't born in it. It stood some two miles south of Steamboat Rock. It had a cellar. I know this, because that sister of mine, Katherine, who was brought into the family by my mother, tells me that she at one time fell into it. The Doubting Castle had a roof of a sort, too; but it left much to be desired, since my mother here, as she told me, lay with my new-born sister Stella in her arms and held the baby to her breast to keep her warm in the bitter winter night; and looking up through the roof at the stars, was able to draw from this vision of other suns than ours a comforting faith in the Ruler of all things.

Comfort was at a premium then; for the winters were very severe ones, even for people with opaque roofs. This was at the very end of February, 1859. It was either in this winter or that of 1858 that the last of the deer in that part of the state were killed. The snow was so deep that the settlers were able to walk on snowshoes up to the deer, confined in their hard-tramped yards in the snow, and to kill them with axes and clubs—and I for one do not blame them for it, for meat was meat. Anyhow, the settlers and the wolves made it impossible for me to see deer in my childhood. The winter which finished the deer made the replenishment of the population in the Doubting Castle a serious business.

From this log house, the family moved to the James Reynolds farm out in the edge of Grundy County, where I was born as hereinbefore set forth. This was not a log house, and I may therefore claim to be a true son of the prairie. The people who built log houses along our rivers were merely the last of the forest dwellers. It was only when a family left the woods,

pushed out into the grassy plains and built a house of boards—or afterward of sods—that they were really initiated into the Grand Order of the Open Sky. We lived there—for now the editorial "we" may be adopted—for three years. That my memory retains some events which happened when I was pretty young is proved by the fact that I have always remembered my going to a spring for water. We left that place when I was still under two years old; and after I was twenty months old I could not walk for a long, long time because of an illness. There was no spring at any of our other homes. So I was less than twenty months old when I ran down to the spring with my mother, wearing a new cap on my head, and feeling very proud for some reason, and tossing little clods of earth into the grass growing by the path. I remember the spring with its soddy rim covered with green moss.

Our earliest memories constitute an interesting study. Two friends to whom I have just spoken remember back to the age of about three years. One has as his earliest recollection the riding up in one of those cable railways called planes which scale the hills in Pittsburgh, and a playmate who had a toy engine made of spools. His mind runs strongly to mechanics. Another had a pony given to him when he was three, which he led into the house, and down a short flight of steps. I rarely find any one who recollects any experience which came at an age earlier than three; and the number who have no memory antedating their fifth year is astonishing to me. I believe there is something significant in the fact that in this very early memory of my own, I recall the spring, the

moss, the grass, and the new cap, and the sensation of exhilaration. They belong to the class of things by the observation and memory of which I have done my most significant work in life.

I think I shall set up an establishment for character-analysis in which I shall gage character and advise occupation by a study of the earliest memories of my clients. Much lucre has been taken through more absurd schemes, if that be possible. People would rush to have these glimpses into their inner natures interpreted. I must have this copyrighted. One fine thing about it is that the clients, or victims, would have themselves to blame if they failed to get agreeable results. They would do their own recalling.

CHAPTER VI

DOC WRIGHT AND POLIOMYELITIS

I OUGHT to remember something fateful which came upon me immediately after the first adventure recorded by memory—that journey in the new cap to the spring for water—but I don't. I was stricken with infantile paralysis. It was no mild case, either. My mother often told me that for weeks I could move not a single muscle of my body, except to roll my head from side to side a little. All that long summer of 1863 she had me to care for amid the heat and flies. If a fly alighted upon my flesh, I could not move a member to drive it away. If my mother laid my arm or leg in a certain position, there it remained like a dead thing until somebody changed it. Of course, I was given up for lost, probably as to life itself, and certainly as to future usefulness. I suspect that had my mother outlived me, she could not have suffered more at my death than to see me thus robbed of everything which made up a living child, save the merely vegetative existence I clung to.

She often told me in my childhood and youth, during which, as is still the case, I have borne the stigmata of poliomyelitis, of what a wonderful baby I was. Far be it from me to deny it. I was with her at Mrs. Millslagle's just before I was "taken down"; and being one of those children who can be here this minute

and on the house roof the next, I disappeared for a moment, and came back with a garland of Mrs. Millslagle's young turkeys in each hand. They were quite dead. I had caught the tender little things, with no object save amusement; and putting their heads between my fingers, had filled my hands and come to the house to exhibit my playthings. Not a small physical feat for a child of eighteen months or so. I could climb up the side of a house. I left to the horses—for we had horses by this time—the responsibility of tramping on me or not when they came into the yard or stable. I had walked at the age of six weeks! Well, if it wasn't six weeks, it was a very early age. And I talked almost as soon. You can not disbelieve a mother when she tells of the precocity and ability of her first born son; and I have all these marvels from her own unprejudiced lips. But now, I was as helpless as a clod.

They had no name for poliomyelitis then. The doctors said I had something the matter with my spine. We have the name now; but after all, the area of ignorance has not been greatly narrowed. One day my mother left me in charge of some one and went with my father to the village. They often related to me the story of their getting into conversation with Doctor Wright. Any talk with him was sure to be interesting. He was one of the outstanding characters of that and other frontiers. He had been misled by mica in the sands of the Iowa River years before and had started a gold fever in Hardin County. He went with the John Royal expedition to California when the gold rush was on to the Coast. His party encountered a grizzly bear when out prospecting, which they shot

and wounded. The others ran—and were always blamed for it by every one but Grizzly Wright—but the doctor could not get out of a corner in the rocks, and after emptying his rifle into the bear, he drew his bowie knife and closed with the foe.

His companions went back to camp and reported that a bear had killed Doc Wright. The party that went for the remains found him lying under the body of the dead bear, his hand still grasping the knife, which was buried in the beast's heart. John Royal ever insisted that he had seen Doc Wright's heart. My father always explained to me that what Mr. Royal saw was the sac in which the heart is placed. I remember that the word "pericardium" in my school physiology was always associated with this most perfect of all bear fights. Two or three of the doctor's ribs had been torn completely out, which accounts for his heart being on exhibition just then. One of his ears was gone, and with it a section of his skull. I remember him as having a strange naked side to his head, with a smooth place where his ear should have been.

The prognosis was grave. He pronounced it so himself; and being the only doctor in camp, one might have expected that they would accept his verdict and pursue the treatment which he ordered. They probably trusted the prognosis, but refused to give the treatment. The doctor begged them to put him out of his misery with a bullet through the brain. They refused to do this, and the doctor lived; and when I last heard of him, say forty years ago, he was hale and hearty at his ranch somewhere in the mountains of Colorado.

He was a doctor with a diploma, and one of the most interesting characters of early Iowa. When I was a little chap smallpox of a virulent type broke out in our community. The first case was correctly diagnosed by Doctor Wright; but the other physicians scouted the idea. The common people are prone to suspicion, and we always believed that the doctors did not desire to stop an epidemic which would give them something to do. I have no doubt now that in this we did them an injustice.

"They say," said Doctor Wright to my parents, "that it is not smallpox; but I tell you that if it's not it's something just as bad. Keep away from it!"

At last the profession generally admitted the smallpox, and called upon every one to come and be vaccinated at an expense the amount of which I have forgotten. Doctor Wright provided himself with vaccine matter, and went all about the country vaccinating all and sundry free of charge. He came to the religious services in our schoolhouse one Sunday, and had Elder Strickler the Dunkard preacher announce that if the congregation would go to Mr. Quick's house after the sermon they would all be vaccinated free of charge by Doctor Wright. I remember the incident itself, and I have a scar on my arm as a memorandum. There was a good deal of feeling against the doctor on the part of his fellow-practitioners; but it led to none of the personal encounters which at one time seemed imminent. I suspect that they remembered the fate of the grizzly.

Doctor Wright was a friend of our family, but for some reason he was not called in with reference to my case. They fell in with him in Steamboat Rock,

however, that day mother left me and went to do some trading. When she suggested to my father that it was time she returned to her sick baby, Doctor Wright asked what ailed the child. My mother replied that I was paralyzed, and described the symptoms.

"If you will go to a barn I'll show you," said Grizzly, "you'll find a beef's gall nailed to the door—all dried. Take it, and after slicing it up, put the slices in a quart bottle of alcohol. Bathe the child's back and legs with this three times a day."

My mother did this, and in a few days she saw that I was beginning to move my legs. She continued the treatment, and I slowly grew alive; and here I am at sixty-three writing my biography. I notice a physician over in the corner laughing at the beef-gall treatment. Of course it did no good. I should have recovered just the same anyhow; but you can't prevent the *post-hoc-ergo-propter-hoc* reasoning from prevailing in medicine, and politics and human life. If recovery follows treatment, *hoi polloi* say the treatment cured. If bad times follow an election, the party put in power is to blame. This philosophy—if one may miscall it that—is the physician's greatest blessing. It gives him his chief advantage over the lawyer. If the patient gets well, the doctor cured him. But the lawyer always has a professional brother on the other side who wins if he loses. And as to infantile paralysis, let me remind my medical friend that the beef-gall treatment is as good as anything the profession even now has for this dread disease.

I now follow my usual rule of writing something, whenever I have the opportunity, for the benefit of my fellow unfortunates who are victims of poliomyelitis, and for those who love them.

Victims of this disease, if they regain their health, which they usually do if they live through the attack, have more ability than a similar number of perfectly sound people. I don't pretend to account for this. But I have no doubt it is true. Maybe people of the able type in brain and nervous constitution are peculiarly liable to have it in its crippling form. Perhaps the change in their habits and occupations has something to do with it; but they are abler than their fellows who are normal in physique. This disease is usually followed by complete recovery, save for the crippling of the feet and legs, and sometimes other organs. So far as I know, no enfeeblement of the mind ever results. I propound the theory that instead of impairment of the mind, a stimulation is given it. This, at least, I feel safe in asserting—that the people whom I have known who have had infantile paralysis in childhood have achieved success in life above the average of their youthful companions, and that through their intellectual vigor, and in spite of the undeniable penalties of impaired bodily powers.

Sir Walter Scott was lame, but the doctors of his day didn't know what caused the trouble. We do know this, however, through Doctor Charles Creighton: "Scott's lameness was owing to an arrest of growth in the right leg in infancy. When he was eighteen months old he had a feverish attack lasting three days at the end of which time it was found that 'he had lost the power of his right leg.' " We need not bother with Doctor Creighton's theory of what took place in the inside of the leg, since he never saw the case. "In his fourth year," the doctor goes on, "when he had otherwise recovered, the leg remained 'much shrunk and contracted.' " I venture the guess that the same ill-

ness which caused the lameness affected the skull so that the bone-growth was arrested along what is called the sagittal suture, causing that wonderful brain of his to force the skull up bodily as it grew, giving it that peculiar depth and narrowness for which the Scott physiognomy is noted. But trust the brain of Sir Walter to make room for itself!

Now it seems perfectly certain that the spell of fever followed by the loss of the power of the right leg was infantile paralysis. They had no more a name for it in Sir Walter's case than in mine—which followed it by exactly ninety years. So I claim Scott for my great Brotherhood of Poliomyelitics. Byron belongs, as a matter of course. The fact that his club foot was the sequel of infantile paralysis is an accepted one. He seldom walked because, his biographers suggest, he was ashamed to be seen limping. I have another theory based on over sixty years of experience. Byron found the British standard of what constituted a stroll too high for his ability in the walking line. He refused to walk because it hurt him physically as well as in that towering sense of superiority of his. Even his biographers and critics have the perspicacity to see—some of them—that Byron's club foot and its humiliation to his spirit were influential in setting that great mind of his at work creating poetry. It may account for *Hours of Idleness,* but it was the brain itself and the hot and rebellious heart which gave us *Don Juan.* These are merely typical instances of complete recovery in cases of infantile paralysis, so far as general health is concerned; associated with bad legs and feet, and immense intellectual energy and ability.

I have no doubt that Homer was a poliomyelitic. Blindness was a very possible sequel; and I claim that Homer was not really blind, but had drooping eyelids merely. This occasionally follows infantile paralysis because of the loss of function of the muscles that lift the lids. Homer saw distinctly, take it from me. I, too, claim for the Brotherhood, and that with perfect confidence, that great conqueror and founder of empire, Timur, Timour, Tamerlane, Tamburlaine or whatever his name was. He was called Timur-Leng, which signifies Timur the Lame. This ought to settle his case; but we have other evidence. Gibbon in a footnote gives a citation to the effect that Timur had a lame arm as well as a crippled leg. This shows that the trouble came through the spine, and not from an accident as is often stated. And as a matter of course, as the peculiar deity of the Brotherhood, we shall adopt Vulcan. He was believed to have been born with deformed feet, but what explanation can there be of that with such parents as Jupiter and Juno? It is absurd. Many authorities say that Byron's feet also were deformed from birth, but we know better. Vulcan, the god of conflagrations and smiths, and the only resident of Olympus who was worth the salt in his or her ambrosia from any practical view-point, belongs to the Great Brotherhood of Poliomyelitics. That he had crippled feet is an accepted fact; but this deformity came, not from being born so, nor, as some mistakenly contend, from his having been at one time hurled from the battlements of heaven by Jupiter. Like most of the poliomyelitic brotherhood, his disability never extended to his head; for he was the divine artist, made everything won-

derful and beautiful in the abodes of the gods, and could give life to his creations, in this resembling Scott, Byron and the Founder of the Brotherhood whom modesty forbids my mentioning.

Somewhere about 650 B. C. the Spartans were at war with the Messenians, and applied to Attica for a leader, because some oracle told them to do so. Attica, to spoil Sparta's game, sent them a man much like me in this respect—he was a lame schoolmaster. His name was Tyrtæus, the great elegiac poet whose songs lifted the spirits of Sparta to the point which demanded and obtained victory and the hegemony of the Peloponnesus. Tyrtæus was a poliomyelitic. Of course he was. Attica should have known better than to send him. I am trying to induce one of our great college professors, who walks on crutches, to do the work on a definitive report on the great poliomyelitics of history and mythology, and shall leave the somewhat obscure cases of Cæsar, Marcus Aurelius, Alexander, Washington, Franklin, Napoleon, Shakespeare, Milton, Dante, Jack Dempsey and some others to be dealt with more fully in that work.

Like most sufferers from this disease, I recovered my general health perfectly. I feel certain that the very important effects of this affliction upon my life were not detrimental. It did not rob me of the ability to walk pretty well; as is proved by the fact that I followed the plow and the harrow just as did other boys of my age; but it prevented me from getting shoes which would fit and made farm work a torture to me. I could do as much of most sorts of it as the rest of the boys, but I was always exhausted at night—an exhaustion, however, from which I had the power to

"Doc" Wright.

rally for the next morning's labors. It destroyed my ability to dance; but, sad to say, did not keep me from trying. It fell short of giving me a pronounced deformity or limp, and many people who have known me all my life politely claim to have noted nothing wrong with me except a rather odd walk.

It made a dreadful dub of me in all athletics, but left me an enthusiastic follower of sports and allowed me to concentrate on that most delightful of all games of physical skill—billiards. It kept me out of West Point, but that may have been just as well for me. Inasmuch as I am six feet one in height, have a reach greater than that of most men who are taller, weigh one hundred and ninety when in training, and was daft about boxing, I think infantile paralysis may have prevented me from becoming a prize fighter; or, in view of the fact that baseball was all the rage in our part of Iowa when I was a boy, and Pop Anson, who lived in Marshalltown, was just getting glory as a member of the Chicago club—I, who was rather demented on baseball too, might easily have become a great professional ball player. I did play a little, but in view of the fact that the farthest I could get on a home run was to first base, I was usually chosen last. And it made the world of the intellect the only realm in which I had any chance. It set me off in a class by myself in our community, in which books were my companions—when I could find any.

I once wrote for *The Saturday Evening Post* an article on poliomyelitis, being urged thereto by my friends whose children had been crippled by it, and who felt that my thoughts might cheer up many who had felt that their prospects had been blighted. I took

the ground, as a member of the laity, that the evidence proves that very few cases of infantile paralysis are recognized as such by the medical profession. I contended that probably every one has it, or nearly all of us. The sanitarians have made no progress at all in checking its spread. It seems to spread and spread until all the available material is burned up.

In most cases nobody knows how the disease is caught. People must take it from others in whose cases it is not clinically recognizable. It must attack the spinal cord in only a small proportion of the cases. It may be that the highly organized cerebrospinal systems of girls and boys of great natural ability are more liable to such attack than others. Anyhow, I make that claim. After my article had been published, I had the pleasure of dining at the Cosmos Club in Washington with two great epidemiologists—Doctor L. L. Lumsden, of the Public Health Service; and Doctor A. W. Freeman, now of the faculty of Johns Hopkins University.

"Lumsden," said Doctor Freeman, after we had sent in our orders, "have you read that article in *The Saturday Evening Post* on poliomyelitis?"

I scrutinized my plate. Doctor Lumsden knew I had written it, and he was the only person in the world who did, save the editor; for I lacked the assurance to sign it. Doctor Lumsden tried to catch my eye, but failed.

"Yes," he replied, "I have read it. Why do you ask?"

"It's the best article on a medical subject," said Doctor Freeman, "that I ever saw, written by a layman."

Then I essayed a blush, mingled with an effort to detect chaffing; for I now believed that Freeman knew I had written it. It turned out, however, that he had no idea as to its authorship. He may have changed his mind by this time, but he can say so if he has. At one time my views on this disease, written to comfort its victims, received from him the qualified approval which I have quoted.

I grew up a clumsy, pale, awkward boy, who never was supposed to be spared the doing of any task he could perform. In other words, I was fortunately not recognized as an invalid. I tumbled down whenever I stubbed my toe, which I did frequently. I walked in the snow to school and elsewhere, with a swing outward of my feet which drew continuous parentheses between my tracks. My shoes never fitted me, and I took them off and went barefooted as soon as the snow disappeared. I remember at various times hearing the women of the neighborhood talking about me to my mother.

"You'll never raise that boy," they often said.

"I hope you're wrong," my mother would say. "I think he's getting stouter every year."

"No," the reply would be. "He's got the mark of death on him. See how pale he is. And he's too good a boy to live!"

They little knew! They little knew! And dying was the last thing in my plans.

Note: The following letter was received after publication of the first installment of *One Man's Life* in *The Saturday Evening Post:*

June 20, 1925.

Mr. Herbert Quick,
c/o Saturday Evening Post,
Philadelphia, Pa.

Dear Mr. Quick:

I have just read your very interesting article in this week's *Saturday Evening Post.* In this story you mention an incident in the life of Doc Wright. Doc Wright was an uncle of my father. He and Mrs. Wright (Aunt Lou) visited my folks last in 1897. Doc Wright was then getting along close to ninety years of age and was as quick and active as a man of half his age.

I have often heard the grizzly bear story and think that I can add something to it which might interest you in case you have not heard it before.

Very shortly after Doc Wright recovered from his encounter with the grizzly two of his pardners came down with the smallpox. He doctored and nursed them back to good health. For this service these pardners decided that Doc should have a silver plate placed where the bear had taken out a piece of his skull. They made Doc go down to San Francisco with them where they passed the hat around the gambling houses, saloons and dance-halls. This excursion, I am told, netted them about thirty thousand dollars in gold dust. However, Doc did not use this gold to get a silver plate. Instead he and his pardners went to Virginia City and located a mine which they afterward sold for big money. He lived most of his life at Buena Vista, Colorado. An uncle of mine, Will (or rather Bill) Palmer, lived with Uncle Doc and Aunt Lou. In 1897 Uncle Doc and Aunt Lou came down to southern California to visit my father, two aunts, grandfather and grandmother. However, he did not like this part of the country. It was not the same California that he had known. After a week or two he was so tired of it all that he wanted to get back to Colorado where he said he could at least get out and shoot a jackrabbit. He and Aunt Lou went back to Colorado and after a short time my father received a letter from him stating that he had decided to make a trip overland down into Texas. But for some reason instead of going to Texas he and Aunt Lou started overland with a covered wagon for western Oregon. They got as far as Ogden, Utah, where they had the misfortune to be hit by a train while crossing a railroad track. Doc was in a hospital there for some little time. After his recovery he wrote my father and said that he was going to stay there and sue the railroad company for damages for the loss of his outfit, and also the injury he had received had impaired his hearing and that the railroad company should pay. He and Aunt Lou did not stay in Ogden, however, but went back to Buena Vista, where Uncle Doc died after a few years.

I can see Doc Wright now as plain as though he were standing in front of me. He was a man of short thick stature. His hair, which hung down to his shoulders, was a beautiful brown. He wore a long beard which was also brown. There were very few gray hairs on Doc's head. He was quick in movement of body, and his brain was clear. He lived and talked always like a true pioneer. 'Forty-nine was only a short yesterday away and Doc up until his death, or rather up to the last time I saw him, was keen to find a new frontier.

How well I remember his last good-by to my father. It was: "Damn it, John, come up to Colorado with us and I will brew you a cup of tea that will float a bullet."

What fine stock those old pioneers were, Mr. Quick. I sometimes wonder what kind of a race of men they would have bred if our exclusion laws had been drawn a little tighter along in the 'fifties and the great American frontier had been allowed to develop more slowly by their offspring.

I thank you, Mr. Quick, for the opportunity it has been to read your first article entitled, *One Man's Life* and assure you that it will be a pleasure to read another installment soon.

Trusting that I have not been a bore, I am

Yours very truly,

(Signed) H. R. PALMER.

1452 W. 48th Street,
Los Angeles, California.

CHAPTER VII

BANDITS AND BURNS

One of my earliest memories still rings in my ears in one wild scream after another—a woman's shrieks of agony. These outcries related to mid-west history which has been admitted into the books—my own novels among others. It is of value, for it illuminates the picture of a temporary phase of our frontier life; a picture which is fast growing dim as we recede from it on our voyage down the stream of time.

There lived among us a veteran of the California and Colorado gold rushes named Rhodes, Peachy Rhodes, who had two excellent daughters; also a family named Rainsbarger who afterward became notorious as outlaws. One of them called Finn—I suppose his name was Finley—was accused of having made derogatory remarks as to the character of the Rhodes girls. Our old gold hunter, taking the law and a rawhide whip in his own hands, gave young Rainsbarger, a boy of eighteen or so, a flogging which filled his boots with blood from his back. Finn swore vengeance, and secretly armed himself with a sharp butcher knife with which to kill Peachy Rhodes.

Our neighbor, Mrs. Millslagle, whose little turkeys I had gathered like flowers, had a daughter, Julia, who at the age of sixteen was married to a young fellow named Charlie Voiles. One day Charlie met Finn

Rainsbarger and his knife, and had a quarrel with him. Finn stabbed Voiles through the heart. The fate of Peachy Rhodes was diverted, and Julia Millslagle Voiles was a widow. My parents had me with them in the village that day. My mother was called to Julia when the body of her husband was brought home. I have no memory of anything which I saw; but I have always remembered the screams of the poor girl, one shriek after another.

This was the first of the known crimes of the Rainsbargers, whose misdoings followed one after the other, however, until all of the brothers but William—who lived the life of a respectable farmer until his death—were either sent to the states prison or put to death by lynch law. For killing Voiles, Finn Rainsbarger was sent to prison for a year, which was a severe enough sentence for a boy of his years who had used a knife in a fight into which he seemed to have been forced by a quarrelsome bully. His language, when he returned, however, did not seem an utterance meet for repentance.

"I sent Charlie Voiles to hell," he was quoted as saying, "and the state sent me to the penitentiary. That makes it even. The one's as bad as the other."

He seems to have ignored the comparative length of the sentences, or our theology was erroneous.

Most people have difficulty in visualizing the life of a community with a gang of outlaws in its midst. They think of a body of men living like the Doones in their valley or in some secret glen like that of the merry men of Sherwood Forest. As a matter of fact, the Rainsbargers went about among us like our other neighbors. They carried on their farms, and Finn

always went with what we called a thrashing gang; and we who had jobs of thrashing used to see him tending the separator. Feeding the grain into the cylinder, standing on the platform of the horse power and driving the circling teams, wearing greasy overalls, telling thrashing-gang stories at noon times and when the machine stood idle, and eating pie with his knife like the rest of us. So with all the Rainsbargers and their more or less mysterious associates who came and went—usually unseen, I suppose. We all knew that horses and hogs were stolen, cattle hamstrung and that other deeds of evil were done; occasionally even a man, like Henry Severance out in Grundy County or the railway agent at Steamboat Rock, would disappear under circumstances which indicated foul play. Opinion was divided as to the guilt of the Rainsbarger gang, as we gradually came to call our Doones. Most of the discussions of this were more or less secret. Things were growing worse, but the Rainsbargers had many friends and no direct evidence against them could be adduced.

I remember that once when I was a youth and making one of my rare visits to Steamboat Rock, a six-foot, gangling, tow-headed yokel with buttermilk eyes and the best haircut that my brother Elbert could give, I was getting a glimpse of dizzy life in the local pool-room and soft-drinks parlor. A tanned, burly, clean-shaved man of about thirty came in at the door and approached the bar. A hush settled on the assemblage. He put his doubled fist on the bar and looked us over.

"I've got to have blood!" he roared, pounding on the bar with a terrible frown. "I've got to have

Painted by E. F. Ward

CAPTURE OF THE RAINSBARGERS.

blood!" and then with a smile he added, "Blood or cigars!"

The practical joker was one of the Rainsbargers—Manse, I think; one of the pair afterward so tragically put to death in the jail at Eldora at the time when the gang was wiped out. In *The Palimpsest* for August, 1923, an excellent publication of the best of the state historical societies in the matter of publications, the State Historical Society of Iowa, there is a good study of the Rainsbarger gang by Jocelyn Wallace entitled "An Iowa Doone Band." There is also a note by the editor on my novel *The Hawkeye* in which is this passage:

"The terrific climax of the book, describing the lynching of Pitt and Bowie Bushyager, is a remarkably accurate account of what actually happened to Manse and Finn Rainsbarger in Eldora on the night of June 4th, 1885. The Bushyagers of *The Hawkeye* are unmistakably the Rainsbargers of reality whose true history may be read in the study of 'An Iowa Doone Band.' *The Hawkeye* is epical."

He who feels that the use of one's own life experience in the creation of fiction militates against originality, does not know how fiction is produced. All fiction is autobiographical. The novelist starts, anyhow, with what he has known in heart, brain and environment. This is true even of such novels as *Vathek* or *Frankenstein* or *Wuthering Heights.* In fact, all art of every sort is autobiographical to this degree, at least, that it has the same relation to the realities in the life of the artist as that which aerial navigation bears to the land. Every flight begins on the ground. The novelist, however, has this advan-

tage: he may begin with something like pure autobiography and then develop his character in the freer air of fancy. He can merge two or even more characters into one. And when his creation begins to live in the pages of his story, it takes on an individuality of its own and reaches heights or sinks to depths never attained by the original, which grows dimmer and dimmer as the work of art begins to throb with its own life. That is what makes novel-writing so much fun.

It is the screams of a woman in the Voiles-Rainsbarger homicide which I remember after all these years. And my next memory is that of a sound too. It is the crying of my little sister, Margaret, when I was three years old—plus two months—and she was giving tongue for the first time. My sister Stella, my niece Laura, older than either of us, and myself, were playing in the firelight of the winter's evening when a strange sound came to our ears. We began speculating as to what it could be. One thought it must be a little lamb. Another guessed a kitten. We were soon told, however, that the doctor had brought a sister to us. I do not remember my first sight of the baby. I remember only that sound. Do sounds more than sights impress the infant mind? Or pains?

I had an experience which, if pains count, should have been indelibly impressed on my memory. I was learning again to walk after the paralysis. My mother was cooking fried cakes—as we always called doughnuts—in an old-fashioned round-bottomed spider, a utensil like the lower half of an iron kettle, provided with a handle. She had finished the batch, turned out the hot lard and set the spider down for a moment, when I, clad in nothing much, and so weak from my

poliomyelitis that I fell down at every breeze, came wabbling by—and sat down on the hot spider! It was a tragedy. From it originated a family expression. My Uncle Matt Coleman, when told about my status as of a brand snatched from the burning, and probably realizing that it was a stroke of real misfortune for me who had no legs to speak of to be obliged to fall habitually in a sitting posture, sympathetically told me it was "a hard dicker." This stuck in my memory, and I was fond of telling people of how I had burned myself, and what a "hard dicker" it was. The phrase sounds odd now; but Fitzgerald in the *Rubaiyat* said nearly the same thing. What is a sorry trade but a hard dicker? Call the spider accident by either name, and it is still absent from my memory. Adult experience leads me to believe that the memory seeks to bury our agonies and keep our pleasures alive. How else save by forgetfulness of pains does one account for the eagerness with which people rush to repeat such experiences as surgical operations, bad investments and marriage after divorce?

CHAPTER VIII

THE WAR SPIRIT SLOWLY DIES

When the people of that little hamlet on the Iowa River, aided and abetted by the flood, stopped our father's caravan on the east side of the stream, they knew what they were about from the view-point of community growth. Within a short time my aunts were married and began rearing families. Our relatives and friends left behind in the East began loading their goods into covered wagons and plodding out over the old Ridge Road with bulbs of prairie homes. A married sister of my mother came with a large family. My sister Armenia, almost as old as my mother and her dear friend from a time before my mother and father met, came with her husband and daughter. This, as they used to say, tended to build up the country. It was the way the West was then settled.

But presently another dispersion began. Armenia's family and my brother, James Orison Quick, went on across the plains while I was still in Anteland. There, as soon as the Civil War broke out, Orison enlisted in the army and was a member of the celebrated First Colorado Regiment of Volunteers. I never saw him until we were both elderly men. And so queer were our family relations that I had the experience of meeting for the first time, after I was grown up, another brother, Alfred, who as an infant went with his

mother, my father's first wife, when the separation took place which made my immediate family circle possible. I came home for the holidays from a school of which I was principal, and found there on the farm a brother and his wife and little son who were all entire strangers to me. My younger sisters had, prior to this time, established contacts through correspondence with both these distant and unknown brothers; but I never did. I not only found my brother at home but found him very ill. The first night after I met him I watched by his bedside, and one midnight within a week he died in my arms. There is something in kinship. I had come to feel toward him a sentiment which I should not have felt toward a stranger, and with no reason so far as I can see even now.

From the house where I was born, I believe, we moved into the village of Steamboat Rock, and lived there for a while during the Civil War. I am writing of things which the world as a whole has forgotten; and I must speak of the intellectual, moral and spiritual atmosphere of that time, as I know it in my earliest recollections and learned of it from the conversations which I heard. These are things of immense importance in the life of a people, but which the historians almost always fail to perpetuate.

If there is anything in prenatal influences—which I believe the students of embryology deny—I surely was affected by the historic factors of the winter of 1860 and the summer of 1861. For the war was coming on, and my mother was in intense anxiety for my sister Armenia and her family, who were crossing the plains from Omaha to Denver City, as it was then

called, and were at one time given up for lost. One report came to our people that they had all starved, and another story was to the effect that the wagon train had been attacked and all its members killed and scalped by Indians. I was one of those children who cried easily; and my mother, who differed from the embryologists, used to say once in a while that it was no wonder, for she had wept over her food that sad summer at almost every meal as she thought that Armenia and Orison and the rest had starved; and my weeping fits were more likely than not to occur at mealtimes.

My Uncles Matt Coleman and Sam Hall and my Grandfather Coleman were Republicans; but my father was a Democrat. He had been a Democrat before the war, and it took more than one war to change a Dutchman. He voted for Stephen A. Douglas against Lincoln; but when it came to the election of 1864 he refused to support McClellan and cast his vote for Lincoln. He was above forty-five years of age when the war broke, and physically disqualified for service; but he willingly allowed his son of sixteen years of age to volunteer and serve. I think therefore that the super-patriots who in any war always gather in the grocery stores rather than at the front were a little severe in calling my father a Copperhead; but in their fervor they did so. Any Democrat was a Copperhead in our locality, if these grocery-store soldiers were to be believed, no matter how many minor sons he might have at the front.

One day when my father was working about the place, that same Charley Voiles who was afterward slain by Finn Rainsbarger came to him as an emissary

of the Council of National Defense down at Harvey Robertson's store.

"I came to tell you," said he to my father, "that we—that is, they down at the store—are talking of running you out of town."

Father grasped his pitchfork in anger.

"Throw down your fork, Quick," said Charley; "throw down your fork!"

Father stabbed the fork down in the direction of China. "Charley," he exclaimed, "there's men enough in this town to carry me out—but not enough to run me out!"

It was agreed that father should go with Charley and face the Council of National Defense, whose accusation was that he had made treasonable remarks in criticism of the administration. They went. My father called upon them to repeat what he had said. This they seemed rather reluctant to do in the face of the belligerent Dutchman, but finally did so. Father repeated what he remembered to have said, and they admitted that perhaps that was correct. Then, after they had told him they were through with the inquisition, with a sweeping impeachment of the veracity of any one who represented his speech as having been other than what he had stated, father went back to his pitchfork.

I have often heard my father tell of sleeping that night with an ax by his bedside, and of his firm resolve to use it in case of forcible invasion of his home by the mob bent on ridding the town of a Copperhead. It was a mighty good thing for the mob—and for all of us—that they did not come. Such incidents show the stress and strain of civil war on any people.

I remember the election of 1868. For one thing, my father, for the only time in his life, came home slightly under the influence of liquor. He was so cheerful and happy—a marvelous thing—that I was quite elevated until I saw the stern look in my mother's eyes and heard the trenchant rebuke she administered to her spouse for this enormity. Father shamefacedly went through the process then colloquially called wilting, and explained apologetically that it was cold and he only took enough, he thought, to warm him up. Intemperance in our family was the unforgivable sin.

It is history that at this election, in which Grant was opposed by Seymour, the women of the family were in a state of great anxiety while the men were away at the election. They were afraid of violence. The passions of the war had not subsided. The newspapers of widest circulation in Iowa seem to have been Greeley's weekly *New York Tribune* and its rival the *Toledo Blade* in which the bitter humor of D. R. Locke did much to keep alive the rancors of the war. This humor was such as to put my mother in a difficult position; for it was Republican humor, and she was one at whom it was directed; but when she read the statement of Locke's great creation, Petroleum V. Nasby, that the people of Confedrit X Roads were the most patriotic people he ever lived upon, or some other bit of sarcasm, she would hold back her risibles a moment and then burst out laughing.

The Colemans were all humorists, and I think Uncle Matt could have made good as a clown in any theatrical circle into which he might just as well have been born. My mother reacted to every appeal of wit, humor, sarcasm, pathos, and the nameless thing in

anything perfect in book or storm or landscape which brings the tears. If Nasby abused the Democrats wittily enough, she gave him his meed of laughter.

When the time came for my memory to record things in general, we were living on what we always called the Widow Fuller Place. It was out on the prairie. The Doubting Castle was a log house and does not belong to the history of Iowa proper. For the people who followed the streams and lived in log cabins in the timber were, as I have said, not real prairie dwellers. They lived almost exactly as did their ancestors in Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee, Missouri, and also in Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Maryland.

Iowa was settled as a southern state by people who lived, in the thin fringes of forest along the streams, the lives of woodsmen. In her history there was a long conflict between the northern and southern streams of influence. Prior to the war, our senators and representatives—men like George W. Jones, Augustus C. Dodge and John P. Cook—took their places with the southerners in Washington. This was proper if they were truly to represent the people of the state. Go to any good history of any county in Iowa east of the median line, and of many west of it, and you will find the first tiny trickle of settlement recorded in the names of families from the South, who located on the poorest land in the state and the hardest to bring under cultivation, just because it grew trees.

This conflict, or rather competition, between northern and southern streams of immigration was common to all the Western States. It had its crisis in Kansas

in the struggle over the slavery question, and culminated there in civil war. It is a great element in the history of Oklahoma and a lesser one in that of Texas. In the Mid-West, the first seepage of settlement crept up the rivers. It came down the Ohio, thence up the Mississippi, and forked off up every tributary stream. There was a time when Stillwater and St. Paul and all the river towns of Minnesota as well as of Iowa were predominantly southern communities. The same was true on the Missouri. The immigration began in the fur trade. Then followed the hunters, trappers, bee hunters and squatters. Ohio and Indiana had their southern slopes peopled largely by southerners. The very name "Hoosier" is derived from a North Carolina colloquialism. From the slopes on both sides of the Ohio came the people who went down to the Mississippi and thence up into Iowa. They came also from the Tennessee and the Cumberland, and from the Missouri. The Burlington Railway in Iowa runs through a region often called the Reservation, which has always shown some social and political points of difference from the remainder of the state. There can be no doubt that this is owing to a larger portion of southern blood and tradition in the people.

Along every river in the state these early settlers built their log houses and their rail fences and lived as did their ancestors in the woods of the Ohio Valley, by hunting, trapping and cultivating small tracts of land which they cleared in the old-fashioned way. Most historians underestimate their numbers. The census of 1850 showed 5,535 New Englanders in the state, and 24,516 from the Middle States. There were

30,713 from Ohio, 19,925 from Indiana and 7,247 from Illinois. These came mainly, of course, from along the rivers, and were largely of the southern type addicted to following the waters. There were 30,945 from the states of Virginia, Maryland, North Carolina, Tennessee, Kentucky and Missouri. But the significant thing is the fact that the population then contained 50,380 natives of Iowa. Inasmuch as the southerners were first in the state, this native Iowa population in 1850 may fairly be assumed to have been preponderantly southern in ancestry.

Iowa then in 1850 was a southern state in population as well as in its representation in Washington. But when immigrants like my parents began to come in the 'fifties, and striking across country from stream to stream settled on the prairie to do real farming, the end of southern domination was in sight. For the southern population in Iowa was in the main not of that stable class which made southern plantations the wonder of the world. They were the more or less vagrant preliminary ripple in the stream of empire, and they soon disappeared, either by moving on to newer lands or merging into the population. Some of them were merchants and people of affairs in our Iowa cities; but they were comparatively few.

The Widow Fuller Place was on the prairie, and it was here that I became a prairie boy, to grow up on the prairie, live with it in all its moods, struggle with its storms, watch the plow destroy it, see its groves of trees burgeon until it looked almost like a strange sort of woodland, count the new farms as they came into being as by some sort of magic, see its winding trails plowed up and give place to straight roads

along section lines, hear the whistle of the railway engine come closer and closer until every county-seat in Iowa was a railway station, and finally to lose entirely the old prairie which we feared, loved and conquered.

CHAPTER IX

THE MYSTERY OF THE PRAIRIE

Our mid-west prairie was a mystery. It remains such to this day. Why was it not wooded? Why did that forest through which we threaded and hewed our way for two hundred years give place first to meadows, and finally to the ocean of grass? Answers in plenty have been given, but none is satisfactory. It is a mystery peculiar to North America. No such prairies were or are found anywhere else in the world. There are deserts and steppes and pampas and llanos, but no great expanses of waving grass in a climate which seems perfectly adapted to the growth of forests. It is a vanished mystery too.

The prairies have passed away forever. He who now looks out over the Iowa landscape sees a region of many tall groves of trees, plowed fields, farmsteads and towns. It has characteristics of its own which distinguish it from the lands once forested. The roads run in straight lines with the points of the compass. The groves themselves are right-angled plantations, and the trees are in rows. The stranger ignorant of the history of the country is struck with the sense of some difference; but there is nothing to admonish him that here was once land of an unbroken sky-line with no object in sight taller than the yellow blossoms of

the compass plant or rosinweed. A thing of great beauty and wonder has passed away forever.

I close my eyes now and see it as vividly as if I had seen it only yesterday. In my native part of it the hills were merely gentle undulations but a few feet high, and the slopes were long and gradual. Between the watersheds and at distances of two or three miles from one another were little clear brooks with banks of black sod, their waters flowing on floors of bright-colored glacial pebbles, their expansions little pools covered with the pads of the yellow pond lily or lotus. These streams could be stepped across almost anywhere. They were beautiful little brooks, so clear, so overarched with tall grasses and willows, so plaided with the colors of the pebbles in the sun, so dark and mysterious in the shade; with secret pockets under the soddy banks for the shiners, pumpkin seeds, dace, chubs and other small fish which populated the pure waters.

For a boy, fishing in them was a wonderful sport. I used to take my ironwood rod brought from the timber for me by my father, or a Lombardy poplar sprout from our grove, and with a pin hook or one made by myself from the steel rib of a discarded parasol, in the hour after school from five to six, take fifty to a hundred of these little chaps, which, dressed by myself and fried by my mother, made a feast fit for a king. "Boughten" hooks cost money—not much, but no sum of cash was a trifle then—and at first I used bent pins. These would straighten out and let my big fish escape, or the fish would wriggle off and get away. This did not for a long time cause any regulation hooks to be provided. A boy was supposed to solve

his own problems. So I took a wire which had some stiffness, turned it for an eye, bent it into a hook and filed it sharp.

Still the fish wriggled off; though it was an improvement on the pins. It would not straighten out when the big ones were caught. I needed barbed hooks. I tried to split off a barb from the wire beaten flat, but it was too much for my skill. Then I found the steel ribs of an old parasol which were flattened near the end and pierced with an eye for the thread by which the fabric was held. This was a treasure. I took a three-cornered file, cut with it down into and through this eye, leaving a rather blunt barb, sharpened the end, turned the wire up into a hook, filed the shank rough to hold my line, and had a barbed fish-hook! Do you suppose any boy ever had more fun out of a jointed rod and a collection of elegant flies? No! I had met a difficulty and conquered it. My barbed hooks were not really good ones; they were poor things—but mine own. I was very proud of them. This was in the truest sense education.

And the fishing! The angler could usually see the prey as it approached the bit of fat pork or the white grub or angleworm on the hook. The hook was usually not four feet from the boy's eyes as he stood in the tall grass and watched the fish emerge from under the bank to take the bait.

Each kind of fish had a way of its own. The dace and shiners swam about amid a swarm of little fellows that were agonizingly likely to nibble off the bait before the big one decided to bite. When that decision was made, it would swim up and take the bait in a manner actually casual. Not so, however, with those

magnificent creatures the pumpkin seeds, some of which were three or four inches long and almost as broad. They came slowly from some secret place, swam cautiously up to the bait, while the fisherman's heart seemed to shake the neighborhood, felt of it with the snout, rejected it, took it in so as almost to hide it, grew cautious and gave it back to the waters, turned about as if to hide again, and then with mouth gaping and fins fanning the water, slowly, very slowly moved to the bait and by almost imperceptible degrees took it until it was fairly hidden and the pole might safely be twitched for the hooking.

How many times have I been unable to wait for the complete engorgement and jerked the bait away too soon! I have done the same thing in fishing the stream of life. I have traveled thousands of miles to angle for most of the game fishes; but never have I had anything like the thrill which I received from watching those pumpkin-seed bass as they deliberated and finally made the fatal choice; or from seeing my white bait disappear in some black-bottomed pool in this same brook as a bullhead, invisible over the black earth, notified me by hiding my white bait in his mouth that I had a bite.

All those beautiful brooks are now forever gone. They were such lovely little streams to us children who knew them so well; but they were like delicate flowers, too tender for the touch of humanity. In those old days the water of the rains flowed freely down the slopes and into the sloughs to seep gradually into the brooks. Then came the human flood and turned those slopes into plowed farms. The water sank into the cultivated earth to nourish the crops, the

waters of the brooks gradually dried up save in wet weather, and the regimen of even the rivers fell to half or a quarter of its old-time fulness. The little streams had banks with none of the stony protection with which brooks of other lands are provided. Now they are poached into mud by the hoofs of herds in the pastures and are merely swales of muck in wet, and cracked and caked earth in dry weather. I am not mourning for them. I am lovingly writing their epitaphs. There is nothing more beautiful in its way than a well-cultivated Iowa cornfield, with its deep-green rows of maize slanting in the breeze; or a field of oats of a still morning, with its nodding heads jeweled with dew; or a green pasture, with its grazing herd; but they have displaced something the beauty of which will never return, and may be recalled to memory as a rare and beautiful thing in a gallery of pictures in the Land of Nevermore; and not without a touch of sadness, in spite of the inevitability of its passing.

The sky shut down over the prairie like a bowl of blue with its lower edges unbroken. The grass was vivid green in spring, grew more neutral in tint as summer advanced, and turned brown in autumn, even before frost; and then to a light russet or gray, varying according to moisture and soil. Every year this heavy coating burned off in the great fires, which brought sometimes loss and even danger and death, but unfailing excitement and joy to the boys. No country with scanty rainfall ever had such prairie fires. The grass grew from a foot or so in height on the dryer knolls to a stature which would hide a tall man walking through in the swales. I have been

wet with dew to my waist while riding a horse through it in summer. Sometimes when the autumn was dry or the snow held off late, the conflagration would sweep from river to river in the fall. More often it came in the spring.

I remember once on a Sunday morning in spring, after a prairie fire, going with my brother hunting prairie chickens' eggs. The nests had been made before the fires. One might think that these beautiful game birds, now almost extinct, would have selected spots of thick heavy grass for their nests; but no, they knew better. They nested in tufts on the hillsides where the coating was lightest. They knew about the fires. We could find the abandoned nests by going to places where the fire had been in some way partly checked. When the blaze approached the nests, the birds would try to put it out by flapping at it with their wings. Sometimes they would succeed and save the clutch of precious eggs; but usually they would fail and be obliged to find a place for a new nest on the bare prairie after the fire had swept on and the grasses had, perhaps, shot up again. In that morning's stroll my brother and I found about two hundred eggs, some of them slightly cooked, but most of them ready for boiling for our dinners.

The prairie lay black after such a fire. By spring, if it came in the autumn, it had grayed and browned by weathering; and a few April days with their warm rains would turn the black to the earth color of the prairie. And then a flush of tender green began tingeing the hollows. In the wettest spots just the ends of the tall grasses would have been burned off, and the blooming of the yellow cowslips and buttercups and

Painted by N. C. Wyeth

THE IOWA PRAIRIE.

honeysuckles would have been scarcely retarded by the flames; and the slough grass of the swales would have shown tips of vivid green in two days after the fire.

But the highlands rallied more slowly. That was the beauty of it. The woolly calyxed pasque flowers, with their yellow centers, were in full bloom almost before we knew it. On southern-sloping hillsides one could surprisedly note some bright morning that the bird's-foot violets had turned the slope to a patch of blue like sky. The sod now was seen some morning to be starred with the little blue and purple and white grass flowers, each corolla an exquisite five-pointed star—and with the yellow upland buttercups. The prairie became a wilderness of flowers, nearly all of which were different from those which our parents had known in the forest lands.

As the season advanced the wild sweet-williams—or, as we called them, the prairie pinks—enameled the landscape, now covered with the rising grass. They were pink, white and purple, and I remember how we passed the ordinary ones by and searched for those with the loveliest mottlings in their centers. With them came the puccoons, islands of rich orange in the greens and pinks. Then the upland prairie lilies, with their large foot-high flower stalks, each bearing its usually solitary red gem, delighting me with their five quivering anthers about the stigma with its purple juice. We had a lily of a different species which grew three feet high in moist places, bloomed in summer, and was much like the cultivated tiger lily, with recurved petals, but a finer flower. Finding a bouquet of these was an event.

With the upland lilies came a profusion of wild

roses. Among the earliest spring plants, along with the starry grass flowers, came the ladies' tobacco, a slaty-green herb which we chewed. Our stomachs must have come through those winters hungry for green things. There was an oxalis, or sorrel, which blossomed early and had exquisite purple flowers, and much larger leaves and juicier stalks than the common sheep sorrel. Its juice was deliciously acid; and sometimes before we had that first life-saver for the table, rhubarb, we used to gather this oxalis, which our womenfolk cut up and baked into pies.

With July, the flowers became preponderantly yellow. I remember that in our McGuffey's Fifth Reader was a chapter from Irving's *Tour of the Prairies,* and what a satisfaction it was to me as I read of something with which I was familiar in his description of the flowers he observed, and especially in the thought—my first venture in literary criticism—that if he had seen the prairies in the spring he would not have thought us so nearly deprived in our flora of the reds, pinks, purples, blues and whites. Yet yellow did predominate in the later year. The tall gum weeds, which we stripped of their dried juice to get a better gum than any which the shops sell, all bear yellow flowers. But the blue gentians—both the beautiful fringed kind and its closed sister—modestly lurked in the tall grass, in the late autumn, and the purple aster-like flowers lined the roadsides until frost.

I remember the thrill of pleasure which it gave me when my teacher once called attention to the arrangement of the flowers in the bouquet which I presented to her along with bushels of blooms brought by others.

It was the first praise for art which I ever received. I was fanatically fond of flowers. I knew where the orchids were to be found. We called them lady-slippers. We had four species of these. The smallest was yellow and rather rare. The next in size was a white with purple mottlings and grew, as they all did, in the sloughs. The next larger was an enlarged facsimile of the yellow chap.

Once a summer or so I organized an expedition, consisting of myself and younger sister, to find the large orchid which grew away, away back in the largest marsh in our neighborhood, in back where the hawks and the wild ducks nested. These expeditions were epical. We had to plunge more or less boldly—we were a little afraid of snakes always—into head-high grass and marshplants. There were dreadful peat-bogs of quivering turf to cross. We never knew exactly where the orchids grew. Sometimes we stumbled in the wilds upon patches of ripe strawberries with which we filled our dinner pails. Usually we found the flowers. They grew two or three feet high; and borne on each tall stalk was one or two, and sometimes even more, great white and purple blooms with lovely mottlings. They were floral pouches each big enough for a humming bird's home if it cared to occupy it. Once we found in them, in a seemingly torpid state, some bumble bees, which roused themselves from a stupor which probably came from too free indulgence in orchid nectar, and terrified us by their angry humming as we emerged from the swamp with the treasures with which we knew our mother would be delighted. It was a childhood's adventure in a successful search for a golden fleece.

CHAPTER X

THE PRIMORDIAL PRAIRIE-DWELLERS

In winter, the open prairie, to the eyes of the early settlers, was of the dreariest aspect imaginable. It was an unending sheet of snow, which drifted into the hollows so as to cover the tallest grasses and willows. Yet life was there. The prairie chickens found shelter under the snow in the hollows, and the wolves and minks and weasels lived upon them and upon the field mice and such small birds as might be found. The bird life of the prairie in winter was, however, confined largely to those I have mentioned.

The prairie chickens lived on the seeds of weeds and grasses, and on rose haws. The predacious animals lived on the chickens. There were few quail out on the prairie until the settlers had opened farms and begun to grow grains and make shelters for them. In my opinion, the limiting factor in the increase of the prairie chickens before the coming of the white man was the scarcity of food in the winter. After the settlement of the country began, I am certain that for a while they increased rapidly in numbers. They still had ample areas of nesting ground, and the fields of the new farmers gave them an increased supply of food.

One day Isaiah Frost, a neighbor, announced a new political issue. He said he demanded that the

legislature pass a law making it a crime, or at least a misdemeanor, for any person to kill a hawk. The reason for this demand for the government to do something was that hawks preyed on prairie chickens.

"They kind of keep the darned pests stirred up," said he, "even if they don't kill enough of 'em to amount to much. If it wasn't for the hawks, I wouldn't have enough corn for mush an' milk this winter, to say nothin' of feedin' my stock. Most of the ears are nothin' but bare cobs. Them cussed prairie hens have picked all the corn off."

They were the most beautiful poultry imaginable. When we awoke in the morning to the sweet music of their mating calls, we knew it was time to clean the wheat for the spring sowing. I read the other day a learned publication in which the drumming of the prairie chicken was mentioned. They never drummed. The partridge of the forest drums, but the note of the prairie rooster was vocal. It was a soft note like the alto horn in the orchestra, a sweet do, re, mi of the chromatic scale which filled the still air of our mornings and evenings with harmony like nothing else I have ever heard.

The cock was a ventriloquist. One could be heard clearly for half a mile; but as the prairie boy, not thinking of the open or closed season—then never heard of—tried to stalk the flock sound would recede with his approach, until at last he would flush the covey which he thought was still afar off.

These prairie-hen concerts were strange orgies of strutting and dancing. The cock would perform all sorts of antics, and then, erecting the beautiful cupid's wings on his neck, and swelling those odd skin

pouches which grew near them into great balls like oranges, he would, with spread wings, take a half-dozen steps forward and with his neck outstretched emit his sonorous "Do, re, mi," to delight his companions and excite their emulation.

This was the alto note of their concert. There was also a soprano, a high oft-repeated call which seemed to have no beginning or end. These orgies took place on some knoll, preferably in a field seeded to sprouting wheat, and ended when the society season closed with the pairing off of the couples for the real business of life—the rearing of their broods. We saw no reason for not killing as many prairie chickens as we could, so in winter we trapped them by the thousands. The traps were made of lath, four feet by four by eight in size, with trap-doors made of shingles upon which the birds were lured by a trail of scattered wheat. When one stepped on the thin end of the shingles, it dropped into the lath trap and the shingles rose to place again, ready for another victim.

I doubt whether this bird could have been protected from extinction in Iowa, any more than could the buffalo have been saved. The land all went into cultivated fields or pasture. In neither could the prairie hen find the nesting safety she required. The only salvation for the birds would have been great estates left in part unpastured and unsown, with strict legal protection and a system of gamekeepers; and this would not have been possible in Iowa.

In winter, the prairie chickens had the country largely to themselves, so far as birds were concerned; but with the coming of spring their special reign was over. The great bird festival of the grasslands was on.

Out of the south came the birds of passage, our regular summer residents, and water-fowl and wading birds by the million. There were several species of wild geese, over whom the great Canada honkers ruled as monarchs; many kinds of ducks, chief among which were the mallards, pintails, widgeons, redheads, canvasbacks and teal; two sorts of great cranes, the sand-hills and the white whooping cranes; and unregarded thousands of plover, snipe and other game birds.

Once in a while a flight of swans would create a sensation among us. These water fowl did not, in my boyhood, make swift, hurried and frightened flights from water to water as their descendants now do. They alighted in armies on the open prairie. I have seen the golden plover, or prairie pigeon, running over the new-burned prairie in such numbers that the surface of the earth seemed to be moving, as with their black bellies and beautiful gold and silver spangles they sought their food. They would rise in whirring clouds and fall in easy braces and trios to the muzzle-loaders aimed toward them. The short-billed plover was, of course, with us all summer. His clear whistle was one of our commonest bird sounds. The great curlew, the long-billed plover, or sicklebill, lived with us too. I have not seen one for many years.

The flight of geese, ducks and cranes clouded the spring sky with wings. Looking toward the horizon as the sun was low, I have had my eyes dazzled by the light reflected from this cloud of bronzed plumage. Their clamor filled the air day and night. By day it was a medley of sounds from the fields, on which

they sat or walked about or frolicked; by night it fell from the heavens in a succession of mysterious calls mingled with the whistling of wings. It filled the imaginative boy with a sense of mystery, a yearning for the vast solitudes from which these winged voyagers came and to which they went.

Ducks, geese and cranes nested on the Iowa prairies. I have recently read a statement in a university publication that the geese never did this; but I know that the Canada geese did. On the William Rainsbarger farm near Steamboat Rock I saw, when I was a boy, a flock of these geese which was established by the hatching of goose eggs under a domestic hen. They were walking about the barnyard with the domestic geese, but always without intimately mingling with them, as if they felt in their blood some element of distinction. Within a year or so I have read in some publication an account of this same flock of wild geese still kept under domestication from the time when Canada honkers nested in Grundy and Hardin Counties. The McClure family, our neighbors, had living about the barn a trio of sand-hill cranes obtained in the same way. A boy with whom I played once caught a young crane on the prairie when herding cattle. Within two days this queer long-legged bird was tamer than a barnyard fowl and would follow its owner about like a dog. As for the ducks, I have found mallards' nests in the slough where we went for the great orchids.

The sand-hill cranes stood four or five feet high when their necks were stretched up, and the whooping cranes still higher. One which I shot came very nearly pecking my eye out as I went to retrieve my

game. They used to stage the strangest of dances on the prairie. They would line up, leap into the air and dance with the oddest mingling of awkwardness and grace imaginable. "He dances like a sand-hill crane," was the last word in criticism of a dancer. It used to be said of me!

He who thinks that it was easy to get a bag of geese in those days is mistaken. I wonder how the goose came to be accepted as the type of silliness? It is the wiliest of birds, whether wild or domestic. The unskilful sportsman might tramp the prairies for days without getting a goose. They put out sentinels to give the alarm when the flock was feeding. They knew exactly how far a gun would carry. Judge Elias Marble and Jack Heffelfinger, of our county, once in the early winter dug some pits in a corn-field remote from habitations, carefully removed the excavated earth and covered the pits with blinds of cornstalks. By hiding in this blind the judge once got twelve geese in one day. This, with me, passed as the most famous exploit of a man who was much in the public eye.

I had an old army musket which, I think, was the worst shooting gun human ingenuity ever produced. It scattered so that one might reasonably have expected that it would once in a while kill something not aimed at, and once or twice it did; but usually it was quite harmless save to him at the butt of it. I determined to resort to heroic measures; so I put nine buckshot in a stout cloth bag and filled the interstices between the shot with small pellets I then soaked this projectile in tallow and laid it out in the cold to harden. I put in a heavy charge of powder,

and with a good deal of difficulty got the bag of shot into the barrel and rammed it home. I was rather serious when I saw how many inches the steel ramrod stuck out of the gun when the load was in. I realized I had some load in the old cannon; but I refused to be scared out of trying it on the geese.

It was Sunday, and the geese were exulting by the millions, it seemed to me, over the fact that my mother would not allow me to shoot on the Sabbath. I waited till morning. The game was scarcer. I could see only a few thousand flying about. Taking my gun I went in the direction of the greatest clamor. It receded as I advanced; but at last I saw a flock of some twenty or so approaching. I squatted behind a bunch of kinnikinnick, cocked the gun and waited. On they came right toward me, until at last they saw me. With a bugle call of alarm the leader ordered a left oblique and an upward slant; and waiting until I could shoot into the feathers instead of against them, I let drive.

A number of things happened. I found myself rolling through a shallow pool of water and my musket several feet away; but as I turned over I saw the great gander coming down head over heels out of the air, and my heart swelled with delight. When I had secured him, I noticed that my breast was covered with blood from my ensanguined nose. I never loaded the musket quite so heavily again, and never got another goose with it. I continued shooting, however. The fact that whenever I discharged the gun for a week or so my nose would bleed was too slight a circumstance to keep me from the field. Youth would not be denied by mere hemorrhage.

I remember the first robin I ever saw. This will surprise Iowa readers; for I believe the ordinary song birds are more plentiful about the groves on the prairie farms than elsewhere. But I was out on the prairie before the timber birds, as we call them, had arrived. I heard of thrushes, robins, orioles, catbirds, cuckoos, wrens, martins, woodpeckers and the like as friends left behind when we moved out of the woods. But as our plantation of young Lombardy poplars, willows, cottonwoods, soft maples, box elders and other trees—and the fruit trees and fruit-bearing and flowering shrubs—grew up, the woods birds came to us as did the friends and relatives we left behind. It was a most comforting reunion, and we loved them all the better because they were old friends to the elder folk and creatures of charming tradition for us younger ones.

But the settlers who cared for birds had two or three old friends with them from the first. The kingbird, it seems to me, was always there, though where he built his nest in the earliest days puzzles me. Anyhow, our fathers and mothers were welcomed by the jolly pipe of the meadow lark on every grassy knoll; and the passionate rhapsody of the bobolink, that most wonderful of bird songs, filled every swale with loveliness and cheer. The bobolink was the chum of my boyhood. He was so companionable. He seemed such a frank and unsuspicious poet. He sang his bravuras out in the open. He went into ecstasies in plain sight; and in the divine abandonment of production, he dabbled his pretty black and lemon plumage in the dew, singing himself quiveringly into spasms down in the very grass, until when the time came for

him to change clothes he was bedraggled and dingy as a poet who has sung himself into shabbiness in the slums through the very losing of himself in exquisite pain. Robert of Lincoln would alight on a tall weed and sing himself down into the dew in the courtship of that little brown mate of his; or would take low flights into the air, warbling as he flew, but never soaring for fear that some one might miss a note of his rich, tinkling melody.

There was in one of my school readers a lesson on the bobolink—I believe it was by Irving—which I always read with joy as I realized that my artist of the prairie had been worthy of being put into print. I think the idea of writing about things which I saw entered my mind with the reading of that lesson. But Irving told of him in his eastern surroundings, and took him down through his fall from poetry to his status as the reedbird of Delaware and the ricebird of the Carolinas and his fate as a bit of pie. And this saddened me. My bobolinks were never shot, and left me after their six weeks of silence to return the next May in new suits, but with the old sweet song and the familiar wiliness with which they concealed their nests. Like some very companionable people, the bobolink maintains his reserves. Seek as much as I might, I never found a bobolink's nest.

As I have said, the meadow lark was always there when the settler arrived. My father made a discovery which he announced at breakfast one morning when I was a boy which shows him to have been a good observer of nature. He told me that there was a new kind of bird singing about. It looked, he said, just like a meadow lark, but it wasn't. It had a dif-

ferent song. You see, we had both the eastern and the western meadow lark in Grundy County. With the eastern species, father had always been familiar; and when he heard that full, rich, bold roundelay of the western species, he could not believe that it was really a meadow lark. So he rated it as a new kind of bird. Well, even the ornithologists failed to make the distinction for a long time. They pronounced our western starling identical with its eastern congener, but at last followed my father's lead by giving it recognition as a separate species, and perpetuated the memory of their error by calling it *Sturnella neglecta* or the neglected starling. I think the two species interbreed along the line of meeting. I would not make the assertion on the strength of what I saw and heard so long ago, and before I knew the importance of accuracy in records and observations; but I feel sure that I have heard the same individual bird change from the rather thin and tweedling song of the East to the bold and liquid sweetness of the West without moving from its fence post. Maybe this is old stuff to the bird specialists, or I may have been mistaken.

My theory of the western meadow lark is that it is merely an eastern bird which migrated to the prairies and learned in the great open spaces to give forth a broader and fuller message than that which it brought from the forests. The Yankees and southerners who migrated went through the same sort of change. In both cases it is the voice of the West, the message of the land of the unhidden sky. I liked the eastern meadow lark, but I loved him of the West. My great love among the birds, however, went to the

bobolink. The meadow lark is there on the prairies still; but the bobolink is almost vanished. Even in the East he is found only in certain localities. I have not heard a bobolink's song for thirty years. It has passed with the little clear brooks and the flights of clamoring wild fowl and all the primitive wildness and beauty and sternness of the prairie.

CHAPTER XI

THE SOLUTION OF THE MYSTERY

What is the secret of the existence of these great treeless plains of the Mid-West? As we have seen, the specialists themselves are divided on the subject. Some say that the soil was too fine for the growth of trees; but they grew well, all sorts of them, when transplanted into it and protected. Some say that the earth is too alkaline; but that is answered by my last sentence. If Iowa had been planted to forest trees when the first settlers came, it would have become a forest. No, the prairies result from the fact that its geological history gave the grasses the advantage over the trees in the struggle for existence. This is agreed. But how? It must have been in that remote time when the glaciers were beginning to recede that the battle was waged between grass and trees; and the victory of the grass was won wherever the climate brought droughts which occasionally stunted the growth of the young forest cover.

One may easily imagine it. The ice wall, stretching down from the north, ended in a belt of fertile soil at its southern margin, where ice was beaten back by the sun; and the terminal moraines were deposited by the mandate of the thus-far-and-no-farther of Nature. In this ever-broadening zone of soil there was at first neither grass nor forest. But both came

in. From the Atlantic almost to the Mississippi, the trees were able to grow so luxuriantly that they could recover from the attacks of the prairie fires. The cover was often for years too wet to burn. During these periods the trunks of the trees grew so large and the tops so tall that they lived on even after a fire. Farther west, the young growth was destroyed by fires and the grasses triumphed. One may see in the oak openings of Wisconsin the area in which the fight is still doubtful, where in some spots the forest is advancing on the prairie, in others receding before it.

Along the streams, the river bottoms were moist and the trees successful, and on the slopes of the bluffs the shade and the springy soil gave the victory to the trees. One can see striking proofs of this along the Missouri. The south escarpments of the valley, which face north near Sioux City, are wooded to the upper edge of the bluffs, in soil which is identical with that of the bare slopes on the opposite side of the valley, and in the same climate. This must be because of the moister shade of the north slopes and the burning sun which beat on the hillsides slanting to the south. The north side of a roof will be mossy and the south slope bare. On some hills here the same eminence is thickly wooded on its northern side and grassy a few rods away on the southern declivity. The factors in the establishment of the prairies were moisture and prairie fires.

And here some may say, "How did the prairie fires come to occur in the absence of man?" This shortsighted inquiry is made by some writers who should have better judgment. We may forgive Charles

Lamb for assuming that in the first seventy thousand ages men were ignorant of the uses of fire—in cooking roast pig, at least—and that cookery was discovered by Bo-Bo the son of Ho-Ti by the act of burning down the house. But writers like H. G. Wells, to mention one instance of many, ought not to adopt seriously a historical theory which is delightful in Lamb but absurd in less whimsical philosophers. Wells, in his excellent book *The Outline of History*—I am quoting from memory—takes the mastery of the use of fire as an epochal advance in the development of the race, and speculates on how this great conquest of nature may have come about, bringing in the volcano as a possible or probable aid.

Now all this is nonsense—nonsense which our modern writers share with the ancients who had fire brought down from heaven. It did as a matter of fact come from the heavens. Primitive man was a forest dweller. Now the majority of our forest fires are kindled by fire from heaven in the form of lightning. Long before man thought of roast pig, he was familiar with fire and its uses. He gathered about the burning trunk of a tree fired by lightning and warmed himself, and he knew of roast pig long before he had a house to burn down. He would learn, before he could talk, how to put more wood on the fire accidentally kindled. He would learn to put a frozen carcass of a killed animal on this fire to thaw it out or warm it; and he would soon find that the fire made it more tender and toothsome. After man became man, there never could have been a time when he did not use fire habitually; and he must have learned æons ago to kindle one fire from another and carry it

from place to place. Instead of being a mystery, the conquest of the use of fire was easy and inevitable.

Whether primitive man lived about the glacier's end in North America, I do not pretend to know; but the prairie fires must have occurred yearly even in his absence. Dead trees would be fired by lightning. The flames would spread to the dead leaves and sweep out upon the great meadows of grass. Thus the forest would light the conflagration which destroyed it. I suspect, too, that lightning from summer clouds might sometimes start fires in the prairie grass itself. Thus it came about that the woods through which my ancestors hewed their way came to be interposed between them and the fertile soil and fields ready for the plow on which was established the new society into which I was born and with which I grew up.

To the prairie pioneer the fires were a danger, a risk, a splendid spectacle and a necessity. They made the pastures better. They burned off the dead grass so that we could make good hay. We mowed the grass on any lands near us with no thought of trespass, and we pastured it freely. Our farmsteads lay surrounded by the grass and our stacks of hay stood out on the prairie over which swept the flames. Our grain stacks stood in the fields of inflammable stubble. So we plowed fire breaks about all of them. Sometimes in a high wind the sparks would overleap these; so when the smoke rose and blued the atmosphere before one of these advancing fires, he who was wise went out and set out a back fire which he could watch while it broadened the grassless area into a real safety zone. Thus the fires were multiplied before the advancing red army.

Painted by N. C. Wyeth

A Prairie Fire.

This line of flames never proceeded in anything like a straight line. It would race up a hill and lag on the downward slopes; or a local breeze would carry forward a long tongue of roaring flame. The blaze generated its own wind by its suction. It was no puny line of low flames; as it swept through the heavy mass of dead grass, there was something terribly magnificent about it. The tongues of flame reached over eagerly and lapped into the fuel many feet ahead of the line. Sparks blew out in front like skirmishers before an army, and set new fires. It moved like a huge billow of fire breaking on a grassy shore which it ate up as it went on. The sound of it was a mingling of sharp cracklings and a deep roar. I can hear it yet, as I write. It used to come to our ears from a mile's distance.

But the memorable thing about it was its splendor. When night came, the whole sky and countryside were lighted up. One could lie in bed in a curtainless room and read by its light. Where it had passed over a hill, the flames went out of sight to reappear roaring up the farther slope. The advance lines seemed to overlap one another. There were apparently hollow squares and detached deployments of flame. Before it was the gloom of lurid smoke and behind a waste of ashes. The next day, over this waste would pass little whirlwinds which would lift columns of ashes in inverted cones to a height far out of sight, at the base of which the ground squirrels, the prairie chickens, the plovers and the other denizens of the prairie were eagerly running about to find whatever there was of interest in the swept and garnished landscape.

My first contribution to polite literature grew out

of the memories of the prairie fire. I had grown up and the prairies had passed away. But one spring evening I smelled the scent of burning grasses from some neighbor's bonfire. It brought back to my heart the old scenes. I could not get rid of it. So next day, instead of eating luncheon, I remained in my law office and wrote a poem. The title of it was *A Whiff of Smoke.* It told of the prairie scenes. I sent it to *The Century* and it was accepted with a letter from Robert Underwood Johnson which thrilled me. As my old friend Elbert Hubbard of Sioux City, said to me when it appeared, I had received the accolade. Unimportant? By no means. It was an epochal thing to me.

CHAPTER XII

MOVING TO HIGH ADVENTURES

When we lived on what we called the Widow Fuller Place, there were two houses at least within a few miles on our little frontier, which extended eastwardly from the Iowa River. One was the cabin of the Whalley family, and miles farther out was the farm of Bill Place. I suppose there were others I do not remember. Seven or eight miles east of the Bill Place farm was the tiny village of Grundy Center, the founders of which had the temerity to locate it in the middle of Grundy Prairie, as we called this expanse of country, though we were far west of the typical prairies of Wisconsin, which were open spaces in the forest, and each of which had a name, such as Spring Prairie, Rolling Prairie and the like. There were some houses near Grundy Center on the west and a spare plantation of them east of it, which grew more and more noticeable as one approached the Cedar River and which condensed about the villages of Cedar Falls and Waterloo.

The house on the Fuller Place was a frame structure and seemed very large to me. It had two rooms below and two, as I remember it, in the second story. The siding was made of basswood, sawed at a mill on the Iowa River, at a place called Hardin City, I believe—one of the numerous lost metropolises of the

real estate booms of the 'fifties. This basswood was unpainted, and when we lived there, one could almost poke his finger through it. No wood so far as I know decays so rapidly. At the head of my bed was a hole burned through this siding where some one had placed a candle on a girt of the frame and set the clapboards on fire. The second story, you note, was not lathed or plastered.

We moved there when I was three and a half years old, and I slept in this basswood-sided unplastered shell of a house at times when the mercury froze in the thermometer—or would have done so if we had had such a thing. In one of these winters the hides of cattle froze and fell off afterward, leaving great sores. When the northwesters blew in January, going to bed was a great deed; but it was sometimes ameliorated by a hot board which my mother would lay between the sheets for a while beforehand. Getting up had no mitigation. Sometimes there would be snow on the bed, and worse still, on the floor. Into it I would step gingerly with my bare feet and scamper shivering down-stairs, to find my clothes and shoes where I had left them by the hot stove the night before.

Our greatest hardships as prairie pioneers in Iowa were bad housing for both the people and their live stock. We tried to build the same sort of houses to which we had been accustomed in the timber. When we pushed out on the prairies, log houses and sheds were not to be had. So we tried out the miserable lumber sawed from the basswood and oak out of the fringe of a forest along the rivers. We did not yet know how to use the materials found on every

new farm. We might have taken the sods made by our breaking plows, laid them up into walls, plastered them with mud outside and in, roofed the low houses with overhanging coverings of boards, and given ourselves houses as warm as any in the world; but we had not learned this. So it happened that, with no coal and only the wood hauled from the timber, the great cold waves and blizzards of every severe winter froze people to death in their beds and destroyed their live stock. I have heard my father relate that after one of these storms he saw hogs frozen to death, standing up in the snow. These were dreadful hardships peculiar to the settlement of the prairies.

I was four years and some months old when I started going to school in the Pine Creek schoolhouse, along the state road between Waterloo and Steamboat Rock—this state road being a wagon track across the prairie, without bridges or other improvement. My brother Charles thought I ought at least to know my letters before entering school, and tried to teach them to me; but I remember having a fit of stubbornness and refusing to look at the mysterious things. The teacher was Maggie Livingstone, who was known as a good teacher, but strict. She it was who whipped Mrs. Wade's little girl, whereof I have spoken.

I became immediately the fair-haired marvel of this little school. And "fair-haired" is correct. My hair was almost white until it grew mouse-colored in my 'teens. The alphabet lasted me less than a week, and I romped through the "a-b, abs" which followed it. I had the old-fashioned instruction which began with the a, b, c's and proceeded regularly to words of

one, two and three syllables, without much reference to what the words meant. For some reason there had been no school in our district that winter, and so we had a six-month term beginning early in the spring and ending in the fall. Before it had closed, I had finished the Fourth Reader, and could read anything in print, with due allowances for mispronunciations. I learned by heart the lessons of the classes in advance of me by listening. I knew *Casabianca* and *Meddlesome Mattie* and *The Death of the Flowers* and many of the old classics weeks before I was called upon to study them. I spelled like a younger Memorus Wordwell. The geographies were a delight to me. Now I had something of which to be proud. I had bad legs and feet, and I was always caught first when playing black man; but in this little domain of learning, I was the wonder of the school, and grew to be the possessor of something like celebrity.

I was not often the victim of Miss Livingstone's strictness as a disciplinarian; but I did not always escape, notwithstanding the fact that I was known as an "awful good boy."

One day Miss Livingstone's beau came to see her, and she was unavoidably called out into the entry at the front. She appointed a monitor to report to her any disorder while she was settling something with her admirer. I was seated with a boy named Charley Robinson. We were studying our spelling lesson, and Charley began looking around and whispering the words as loudly as he could. I followed suit. When Miss Livingstone returned and called for a report, the monitor told her that Charley Robinson and Herbie Quick had been talking out loud. Whips were sent for.

I was selected to take the first lashes on my back, covered only with a thin cotton shirt. Now I was the greatest cry-baby in the school, and she must have expected me to burst into tears at the first blow. But no; I sat stolidly and took it—white-faced, I have no doubt. You see, I was aroused at the injustice of the thing. Not merely because I was being whipped but technically I had not talked out loud; I had only whispered my lesson audibly. I was naughty, but not guilty as charged. One switch after another was broken over me, and still I did not cry out or weep. If Charley was to have anything like his share, the teacher had to attend to him or send for more switches; and so she left me still unconquered. Charley broke into loud wails at the first stroke. He yelled and shed copious tears, and when she let up on his back he still made the welkin ring.

"Be still, Charley!" she commanded. "As big a boy as you are, you ought to be ashamed to cry so. I whipped Herbie much harder than I did you, and he isn't crying!"

At this speech of something like commendation, I was broken. I did more than burst into tears—I exploded into spasms of weeping and moaning. I could not stop. Miss Livingstone tried to command a cessation, and then to comfort me. I was inconsolable. If I for a minute succeeded in gaining control of myself, my wrongs and humiliation would return upon me, and I would break up the session by convulsive sobs, until the teacher finally had to send me home. After that she was afraid to punish me.

I suspect that this episode did her no credit in the neighborhood, for it was her last term there. Yet to

her excellent instruction I owe much. She started me on the life of books and reading which has made of me about all that has been valuable or successful. That whipping of such an "awful good boy" did her harm, I have no doubt.

I wonder if any of us know our own children. I feel sure that those of us who have retentive memories of our very early years recall things which our parents never suspected, which indicate that the secret individual life begins at a surprisingly early stage in our development. I was such a little chap when we lived on the Fuller Place, and so weak and clumsy, that I had little efficiency in mischief. Once I tipped over a whole boiler of soft soap which my mother made. I went directly to her and weepingly told her of it. This was one of the things which caused the old women of the vicinage to assert that Mrs. Quick never would be able to raise me—I was too good a boy.

And yet I remember that one day while I was going the forty rods or so to school, and that, too, after reading in my book a lesson against cruelty, I saw a land tortoise crawling slowly across the road. I felt a sudden brutish impulse to be cruel. I wanted to know how it would feel to be a cruel boy. So I got a stick and deliberately beat this poor tortoise to death. I can see his beautiful shell cracking under my blows and the blood running out into the dust of the road.

I recall, too, as if it were yesterday, that one day while I was alone I walked about a pit filled with water, and while throwing clods in it I did "swear horrible." Why, I had and have no idea. Perhaps I felt with Sir Toby Belch "that a terrible oath, sharply twanged off, gives manhood more approbation than

ever proof itself would have earned him." Proof, in the Belchian sense, I certainly lacked. I forget just what these terrible oaths were, but I have no doubt they were sufficiently dreadful; for though I never heard a profane oath from the lips of any of my family, I had lived for a while in Steamboat Rock, where swearing was not a neglected art.

These crimes gave me a wicked satisfaction and hung heavy on my conscience. I never noticed that my mother was anxious at the suggestion that I was too good for this world. I believe she understood me pretty well, as she seemed to understand most people of her acquaintance. The hero of Tolstoy's *Resurrection* was one in whom the tide of virtue ebbed and flowed. After he had been devoted to righteousness for a while, he lapsed into something else, and was only redeemed finally by an encounter with Maslova after his own sin had brought her to the very depths. One may be certain that this characteristic of Nekludoff was a part of Count Tolstoy's autobiography—anyhow, I feel certain of it.

I have revealed that in my early childhood, at least, I had a tendency to a similar ebbing and flowing. I am willing to accept thus much of likeness to the man who wrote what I think the novel of novels which is most nearly without fault. I do not mean *Resurrection,* but *Anna Karénina.* Tolstoy and Hardy are alike in this—that each wrote things of unsurpassed art until overcome by the yearning to preach while writing fiction. Hardy's descent from the heights began with *Tess of the D'Urbervilles;* Tolstoy's, as I remember it, with *The Kreutzer Sonata.* Neither's fiction was ever the same again.

Up to my eighth summer we lived on rented farms. The Widow Fuller Place was the last of these. In 1868 my father bought a piece of raw prairie ten or twelve miles from the river, and that summer it was broken up. In those days we always allowed the land to lie fallow from the April and May of one year to the April of the next before putting in wheat, which was, in a way, a year wasted. Settlers farther west, after a generation of prairie experience, learned to sow the new breaking in flax as soon as it was turned, and thus often got a crop the first year as profitable as any reaped afterward. Many of them sold their flaxseed of this crop—for they did not use the fiber—for enough to pay for their land. But our farm was broken up in the early part of 1868, and as the snows went off in the spring of 1869 we moved out.

This is my first memory of moving. We had no covered wagon, for the distance was but a few miles. The household goods were loaded in the wagons, the cattle were driven before us, and out we went across the treeless waste, passing, I believe, only one house on the journey. My brother-in-law drove one team and my father the other. Just south of our new farm was a brook swollen by the spring thaw. Father halted on the brink of the angry little flood, while my brother-in-law, with a boldness which impressed me deeply, waded out into the water. He was testing it for bottom. The ice was still strong.

"It's as solid as old cheese," said he.

Father drove through while I trembled. Half a mile beyond stood our new house. It was a building which many farmers nowadays would not think good enough for a henhouse; but it was ours. There was

a magic in this word. A block of this black, turned-up sod half a mile long and a quarter wide was ours. That house with sides of boards running up and down and with no lath or plaster was home. The stable was made of crotches cut in timber and set in the ground, with poles over the roof, which was covered with prairie hay spread on with a pitchfork. We had no knowledge of any such thing as thatching. The teams turned in before the door, the goods were unloaded, the stove was set up for the house warming and the cookery, and we were installed in the Hagen Place, as we afterward came to call it.

We were farther out on the prairie than ever before; but the settlement was now spreading over the whole country like a rash, of which we were only one of the numerous pimples. The doom of the prairie was coming upon it. No sooner was the thaw over and the broken sod a little dried than my father and brothers were out putting in the wheat. As for me, it was learned that two miles to the south, in another district, my sister and I would be allowed to enroll in the school in District Number 9.

One of the most dreadful experiences of my life was this of my going with Stella and entering this school. It was a long tramp for me over the prairie. I was barefooted, and I suspect dressed in nothing much but pants of blue or brown denim and a hickory shirt. These may or may not have been patched. As we drew near to the schoolhouse, we could see a few children playing about it. They were to me very terrible beings. We slowly made our approach to the edifice, and found ourselves the objects of a sort of astonished curiosity.

Not one of the children spoke to us; they simply sheered off from us and stared. I felt a strange sense of being insulted and humiliated. I felt a consciousness of outrage which I can not describe. These little fellow-beings, it seemed to me, not only despised me but were actively hostile. I shrank from them and slunk around the corner of the schoolhouse, while my sister, who had more fortitude and confidence than I, but not very much, tried to comfort me. The world has placed me in many trying positions since that day in 1869, but never through any contact with my fellow human beings have I suffered as I did then. We talk of the trials and sorrows of childhood as trifling; but they are tragic to the sensitive child—and who shall say for any child that he is or is not sensitive?

Those children did nothing to me except to stare at me. They were known to one another, and that gave them the advantage over us; but like us, they were born to the solitudes. The intrusion among them of a strange boy and girl embarrassed them too. We were all in a sense hermit children to whom companionship came only after meetings the beginnings of which were pangs.

Presently, by the ringing of a hand bell or the rapping upon a window, the teacher called school. The other "scholars" went in, and slowly we sneaked rather than crept in after them. Stella was given a seat on the girls' side of the room, and I, because of my small size, one down near the front alone, but on the boys' side; and as I looked about at all those—few—strange forbidding faces, I broke down and wept all over the place. The teacher, a kind country girl, came and comforted me, took my name and age, and

Armenia Quick. Margaret Quick.
Helen Quick. Stella Quick.

Armenia, a half-sister on the father's side; the others full sisters of Herbert Quick.

was surprised because I had been through the Fifth Reader time and again, and had a big geography. Soon, of course, I was an intimate in the little society, and as happy as any schoolboy. And in this schoolhouse I was to receive all the formal schooling I was ever to have.

Readers who think of the barefoot boys of the prairie as condemned to that condition because of poverty are wasting sympathy. We went barefoot because it was more comfortable. In cold weather we wore boots after reaching the age of seven or eight years. These had legs coming well up toward the knee and were pulled on by straps at the sides. This, I take it, is the Wellington boot of the British writers. Younger children wore shoes, and for a while these were tipped with copper at the toes.

When we first lived in Iowa the children's shoes were made by my father and mother; but I do not remember these. I recall the fact that they were never rights and lefts. Both shoes were alike, and I suspect they had only one excellence—they were better than nothing. As for me, I threw off my boots the earliest of all the boys; for my feet were deformed by infantile paralysis, and walking in boots which never fitted very well was always painful.

The sense of freedom and lightness which I felt when I could go barefoot was one of the exquisite pleasures of spring, as it was to most boys; and I not only put off boots as soon as the frost was out of the ground, and sometimes before, but I left them off until frost in the fall imperatively demanded of me, as it did of Whittier's hero, that I must "Like a horse, for work be shod."

The burned-over prairie had its drawbacks for locomotion with bare feet. The soles of our feet soon grew toughened to the ordinary paths and fields, but the fires left the stems of the grass sticking up in stubs, as we called them, which pricked our feet, and sometimes penetrated them and gave us festered sores; the Iowa grievance analogous to the stone bruise of the East of which we heard our elders speak.

To the boy with feet sore from these stubs, or to the one who was obliged to walk over the newly burned prairie just robbed of its carpet of grass, the mischievous rodent known as the pocket gopher was a true friend. This little animal is a cousin to the mole. It lives in galleries a foot or so underground. It is not blind like the mole, but sees after a fashion out of little eyes buried in its lovely, silky brown fur, which would now be worth its weight in national bank bills, were it not for the fact that the skin on which it grows is so thin and tender that the fur value of the pelt is destroyed.

A strange animal is the pocket gopher. It has no ability to take care of itself when out in the open, and if one is caught even a yard from its hole, it will make no real effort to seek shelter—being hopeless of finding its way, I suppose—but will rear on its haunches and die fighting. As it bores its runways under the ground, it throws up a mound of nice soft earth every two feet or so. The barefoot boy used to greet these irregular lines of gopher mounds with joy; they were so soft to tender feet, so cool for fevered ones. There were many of these between the Hagen farm and the Place schoolhouse where we attended school that summer. I have often been drawn far from my proper

route by this carpet, better than a Persian rug. My sister, who wore shoes to school, would pursue a direct route over the greening swells of sod, while I would follow trails of gopher mounds until far off my course, and then be forced to walk as far over the stubs as if I had gone along with her.

On these walks over the bare prairie we had many adventures with snakes. It was not cruel to kill snakes, but rather a duty, we thought; and one evening I killed seven within ten feet of one another, pulling the last by the tail out of a hole into which it was crawling. These were harmless snakes, if we had only known it, and probably useful. But the conquest of this snake convention was a great achievement for an eight-year-old boy. Our only venomous snake was the small prairie rattlesnake, which my father always called by its Indian name, *massasauga*. There was a large spotted snake which was a fearful thing in our minds. Some called it the rattlesnake's mate, others a bull-snake. When exasperated, it would set the tip of its tail quivering exactly like a rattlesnake, though it had no rattles. Here is a problem for the evolutionists. Did the rattlesnake develop rattles because it found them useful to a serpent which quivered its tail when in danger, or did the bullsnake quiver its tail because it once had rattles? I have a theory covering this important matter, but shall not develop it here.

CHAPTER XIII

THE LAND AND THE PEOPLE

A LAND boom now affected my life and made mid-west history. It was not the first that had swept over Iowa, nor the second. The landscape was dotted with town-sites long before we arrived in the state—most of them abandoned. The early epidemics were times of feverish investments in farm lands by speculators who usually remained non-residents, and by men who founded or sought to found cities. They called them cities, even though they consisted mainly of rows of stakes at the lot corners. Hardin City was one of them, only two or three miles from my birthplace. Many of these which actually came to function as towns have in recent years been inclined to slough off the "City" part of their names.

After my father's wheat on the Hagen Place had grown so that it stood tall and green and rippling like a lake, a German immigrant offered him a price for his land which seemed too good to be true. He had paid something like five to seven dollars an acre for it in 1866. He was now offered something like twenty—I think it was twenty—for the land and crops as they stood, with the stable made of crotches with hay for a roof, and the little house boarded up and down.

This was when the great German immigration reached central Iowa. It had flowed into Illinois some

years before, and many of our German neighbors came from that state. Illinois was jealous of the drawing power of Iowa. People took sides between these two states as they do now between football or baseball teams. I remember a story of toast answering toast attributed to two German farmers in a saloon—one for Illinois and one for Iowa. It will not bear setting down here; but it shows the keenness of this partisanship.

Mr. Hagen paid my father his first payment and father never thought of putting it in a bank. I do not believe he ever had a credit account at a bank, though he often had notes there. He brought the money home to the up-and-down-boarded cabin which we had not yet vacated and gave it to my sister Kate for safe keeping.

And that day we had an adventure. All through the afternoon, a solitary man was seen wandering through the grass of a wide slough to the west of us. It was not the hunting season, and those of the family who noticed him wondered what he could be doing. As darkness shut down over the lonely house, a man—we had no doubt it was the wanderer of the marsh—came to the house, or rather approached it.

Now we had a big black dog, called, from his coat, Curley; a perfectly amiable dog that never felt at liberty to assail any one, and was never allowed to do so. This night wanderer came up the slope toward the house and turned in at the track leading to it. He was wet to his waist, bedraggled with mud and seemed very weary. In his hand he carried a small bundle. Curley walked toward him with the bristles standing up on his neck, a fierce growl rumbling in his throat. The

man thrust out the bundle toward him and Curley sprang at his throat. Missing the clutch, the dog found himself in the grasp of my father, who was also enraged. He seemed enraged with as small a reason as that which animated the dog. Poor old Curley became the victim of my father's anger because he had violated the rule that he must not molest strangers. Picking up a pair of old-fashioned tongs which had come down to us from fireplace times, father belabored Curley until the tongs were actually bent. Curley yielded, still growling, and the man asked in language which seemed to be very broken German if he might stay all night.

"No!" said father curtly; and this seemed a terrible thing to me. It was such a breach of our habitual hospitality.

Our would-be guest protested, still in broken speech, about being tired and hungry. Father told him that a mile or so farther north he would find the home of a German with whom he would be more comfortable. The man protested still more emphatically. He would stay! Father stepped up to him, holding aloft the bent tongs.

"Did you see what I did to the dog?" he asked. "Now you git or I'll wind these tongs right around you!"

He got; and my sister Kate reported that as he passed the corner of the house he was filling the summer air of Iowa with curses in as fluent English—of a colloquial nature, of course—as one had ever heard. Evidently our visitor was not a German. Evidently, too, he was pretending to be something he was not. We found out afterward that he had not asked for shel-

ter at any house in that region. The episode looked suspicious; and I still believe that poor old Curley, the companion of my boyhood, as worthless a dog as ever lived under ordinary farm conditions, instinctively felt in the man's presence something evil and threatening. I believe that our caller belonged to a gang of outlaws who lived within fifteen miles of us, and who subsequently terrorized the whole countryside. I suspect that Curley made an issue which gave my father the resolution to pull the latchstring in with a gesture that intimidated a man with robbery in his mind.

Curley lived to become a canine wreck, so rheumatic that he would sit up and howl rather than come for his victuals; but he invariably tried to sneak past another rule—that he must not follow the team to town. When the team started, Curley's rheumatism was immediately cured. He would sneak out along the road for two or three miles, and then come frisking out, wagging his tail as if, now that he had come so far, sending him back home was really not to be thought of, and moreover suggesting that his going had been agreed upon all along. One morning after he had reached the point at which his condition called for his being mercifully disposed of, father, who had always been talking of what a fine pair of driving mittens Curley's hide would make, addressed the dog as we were sitting at our breakfast, eaten long before daylight because the team was going to town with a load of wheat.

"You old cripple," said father, "I'll let you follow me to town to-day—you're always so fierce to go—and I'll have Rice the tanner tan your hide."

But when he drove out with the rattling wagon full of bags of wheat, Curley made no proffer of his company. This had never happened before within the time whereof the memory of man ran. It was remarkable. As the team turned into the road, father called him, but Curley refused to budge. Had he understood that threat of having his shaggy black hide tanned? The load of wheat was halted in the road and an effort made to wheedle him. Instead of following, Curley made a retreat toward the stables and disappeared; and it was not until long after the noise of the receding wagon had been lost in the distance that the wise old rascal came back to the house for his breakfast. And from that time he declined and refused to follow the team off the farm.

Was it thought transference? I do not believe that it was just pure coincidence—he had had such a mania for following teams. Neither do I believe that the fury with which he attacked the man with the false German accent who asked to stop with us the night when we had in the house the purchase money of the farm was anything purely fortuitous. I believe that Curley, through instinct or that understanding of language which dogs acquire, or in some other mysterious way, was impressed with the feeling that going to town with the wagon was not a good thing for him, and shrank from it ever after. I believe that something evil in the mind or soul or appearance of that man aroused the enmity of the dog.

His hide was never tanned, I am glad to say; he lived a long time after his escape, died of an accident, and was wept over by the children. He was the first dog by whom the writer was ever owned. If in some

other sphere our faithful dogs shall bear us company, I am sure to be met by old Curley, who will leap upon me and smear my white or other garments with golden dust from the street or with black from the coal pile.

The German immigrants who began to come in as soon as the railways reached us, brought in their children a new element in my boy life. It so happened that with some of these German boys I was as intimate as with the American youngsters. The German boys were mainly good, honest, unspoiled children of the goose-herd type from the shores of the North Sea. To step from the atmosphere of frontier Iowa to a land of wooden shoes and peasant simplicity gave me the spiritual experience of a trip to a foreign land and to a new moral world without leaving the farm. A part of the time I lived in the social and mental atmosphere of the peasants about Emden.

When they came, these folk knew nothing of prairie life. They were possessed of the Nordic conceit which is now stimulating the production of so many books; but they made up for their initial Nordic refusal to adapt themselves by their unremitting industry, their high racial intelligence and their willingness to adopt the prevailing modes of agriculture when convinced that they were profitable.

The process of the assimilation of these people into our population began, as is always true in such cases, with conflict of minds. Our philosophers and statesmen do not deign to consider these in detail; but they are of much more importance in the great American problem of immigration than such things as distinctions of Nordic, Alpine and Latin.

The things I had learned in school were immedi-

ately brought into the field of controversy as I became a boyish visitor in the household of Jacob Riemann, a German who settled on the farm east of us. Jacob crushed me when I was ten or twelve by attacking as impious and against the Bible the doctrine of the earth's revolution around the sun. If the earth had been doing the revolving, he angrily asserted, Joshua would have commanded the earth to stand still, and not the sun. That was all there was to that! It was wicked to teach such stuff as the teacher told his children in this Iowa school.

I asked him how large he supposed the sun to be. He replied that his old teacher in Germany taught him that it was as big as the hind wheel of a wagon; but as for Riemann himself, he thought it was bigger than that. In making this concession to modernism he assumed the attitude of an advanced progressive, not bound by the size of the hind wheel of any wagon. In Germany, he said, there came a day once in a while when the sun came by "yumps"—that is, it rose a rod or so high, stood still for a while, and then "yumped" again. He was not hoaxing me. He believed what he was saying.

To a rather smart-Aleckish boy like me, this seemed a killingly ludicrous figment of a darkened mind; but in the matter of revolutions in orbits I have since had the conceit taken out of me. The theory now accepted by the scientists teaches us, I believe, that the atom is really a minute solar system with a central nucleus; and that the office of the planets revolving about it is assumed by electrons. These revolving electrons, we are told, not only jump habitually from an inner orbit to an outer one, and vice versa, but do so without tak-

ing any time in transit, and without passing through the intervening space. Thus there takes place in the atom billions of times a second, let us say, something quite as incredible as the act of the sun called for by the Riemann theory. So I have withdrawn my denial of the Riemann statement of what took place in Germany until we hear further from Doctor Bohr's studies of the electrons. There may be a sort of Einstein truth in it. Maybe the sun does "yump."

Our German neighbors, so far as my acquaintance went, all believed in witches. They followed our American custom of using the term "witch" as a noun of common gender. One of them told me that "vunce in Chermany," on a bitterly cold day in winter, while he was thrashing grain with a flail in his master's barn, a butterfly came fluttering through the place. How could that be, he asked, when it was so cold?

"It hatched out in the warm barn," I ventured.

"It vasn't a butterfly at all," he explained scoffingly. "De man ve vas vorkin' for vas a vitch. He made himself into a butterfly so he could fly in to see if ve vas vorkin' hart enough!"

"Vunce in Chermany" became to me the equivalent of the "Once upon a time" of the fairy tales. "Vunce in Chermany" a witch had displayed to the people a rooster walking about with a huge sawlog attached to his leg. The fowl jerked the log about as if it had been a feather. But in the crowd was a child who was superior to the wizard's enchantment—I believe because it had not been christened. To this eye of innocence, the sawlog appeared for what it actually was—merely a straw tied to the rooster's leg. Witchcraft was balked. It was thus that, when with our German

neighbors, I lived in a strange and very un-American world.

To us rather primitive Yankees, as they called us, their courtships and marriages were matters of astonishment, not to say scandal; as much so as the amatory conduct which, according to Diedrich Knickerbocker, the young men of Connecticut endeavored, with some initial success, to introduce among the maidens of the New Amsterdam Dutch. When one of our young Germans courted his flaxen-haired Fraulein, he made no effort to conceal the process. He just went ahead and courted. There was no assumption, as among us, that he had dropped in to talk about the weather or the Hessian fly in the wheat. He did not bring a pocketful of candies with mottoes on them to furnish a substitute for conversation between him and the girl until the men of the family pulled off their boots, set them by the stove and retired. No, our German swain, as often observed by me, sat in the family circle in the presence of the whole world, with his pipe in his mouth and his arm about the waist of his girl. He did this very much with the air of a knight planting his banner on the battlements, not so much for the pleasure of it as from a sense of duty, and as a sign of conquest. It was the thing to do, you know.

Some of their peasant ideas as to marriage were equally surprising. An instance is in point: One of our neighbors had left in Germany a sweetheart who, he said, had promised that she would join him on the farm which he confidently expected to acquire in America. This expectation having been realized, he saved the money for the girl's passage. The business

Painted by N. C. Wyeth

A Snow Scene on the Prairie.

of bringing immigrants from Germany to Iowa had grown to be a profitable one, and was in the hands of Germans with talents developed in that direction. To one of these Fred intrusted the money for the girl's passage. The land and immigration agent went to Germany with the money and returned with a cargo of Germans—and a girl for Fred. He was astonished, he told us, and, I think, strangely put out at first to find that it was not his old girl at all.

"It vas dis vay," he explained: "Ven he got dere mit my money, dis olt girl I hat didn't vant to come any more. Maype she vas scairt of the water. Maype she hat anodder feller yet. So anodder girl said she'd come. De feller dat hat my money looked at dis new girl, an' he t'ought she'd do all right for me. 'All right,' he said, 'I dank you'll do.' Ven she got here I vas mat, but I looked at her; and after a vile I sait, 'You'll do all right'; ant ve got marriet. You see, I hat all dat money in her. She's a goot worker. She'll do goot!"

Now among us the sentiment of love was scarcely ever mentioned save in the agony of courtship. Such mention involved a concession to sentiment which was extraordinarily difficult. But as the basis of matrimony, the sentiment itself was conclusively presumed to exist. Such a thing as Fred's matter-of-fact acceptance of the substitute mate, and its failure to be regarded as anything but a good joke on Fred by his fellow-countrymen among us, had a tendency to set him and them off from us as a different order of beings. Such things are important factors in the process of the assimilation of peoples.

As for Fred's marriage, I do not see how it can

be denied that it was a success. He had bought a small tract of what we called inferior land on a contract by which he paid for it by a share of the crop. It was soon paid for. If babies had been treated as are motor-cars now, Fred and his wife would have been obliged to get one more set of license plates every year as long as I knew them. There was a new pupil in school every year from that family. And I am informed that, starting with eighty acres of land, Fred has given to each of these sons on his coming of age a hundred and sixty acres, and to every daughter a thousand dollars as a wedding present. I regard it as proved that the substitute wife has, as Fred predicted, "done pretty goot."

Through these our foreign neighbors I first learned to mistrust the printed word. In my geography book it was set down to be memorized that the Germans were distinguished by their high general intelligence, the universality of education among them, and by their cleanliness. I began to question their education when Mr. Riemann instructed me in astronomy—and then there was the matter of their cleanliness. I found out afterward that there were among them some remarkably good cooks and housewives; but for some reason this was far from the rule. I suppose that most of them had been living lives of deep poverty and economic depression in the old country, and they had the lack of cleanliness which usually goes with such poverty and depression. One could be brought to a nauseated realization of this by running with a thrashing machine which thrashed their grain.

The presence of chickens and pigs in the house was common among them; and they ate things which re-

volted us, both as to matter and manner of preparation. Doctor McCollum tells us that we Americans have gradually ceased to eat the best parts of the animals which furnish us our meat, and that the savage who devours all glands as well as the other internal organs is much better nourished than we. Our German friends did not equal the savages in utilizing the whole carcass; but they did consume things which we rejected. If one will consider the barrier which varying standards of food raise between peoples, he will be able to see how these things affected the attitude of those two classes of citizens toward each other.

We found other and less debatable indictments against their habits. The sale of fine-tooth combs became brisk in our stores as soon as the German children began coming to school. So rare is the present necessity for this implement in America that I feel obliged to explain that the fine-tooth comb was an instrument for removing lice from the hair. In that great division of the melting pot, the public school, the German and American pupils sat together; and from the fair German heads bowed over books with ours we got the parasites which called for the use of the fine comb. During this period our girls began to cut their hair with a long bang across the forehead, and my sister once insisted that the bangs of one little Gretchen were often so covered with these insects as to resemble bead fringe. This was, perhaps, an artistic exaggeration; but the bugs were there, and their presence did not seem to me to harmonize with the statement in my geography. Nor did the fact that that disease of filth, scabies—vulgarly called the itch—so often came along with the foreign population of the hair. That it did is

a truth of history, as I can personally testify. Our mothers fussed and fumed and execrated "the Dutch," as we called these people, and greased us with red precipitate and lard and something mercurial which they called "angwintam"—which I take to be dialect for unguentum—and gave us doses of drugs, which were of no more use in combating parasitic troubles than they would have been for fallen arches.

As I write this, Doctor Charles William Eliot is giving the press much to say in discussion of his utterances on the assimilation of the races in America. He is quoted as having said that the melting pot is non-existent, and that assimilation is neither possible nor desirable. I suspect that what he said has been misunderstood. Surely he could not have meant that assimilation has not taken place in the past. He could not have denied the assimilation of such races as the British, the Irish, the Germans, the Dutch and the Scandinavians in the history of the United States.

Take the Germans, for instance. Our first great inland frontier was largely Germanic. From the Hudson to the Delaware it was preponderantly Dutch. Southward along the Cumberland-Shenandoah Valley and on behind its mountain wall clear to North Georgia, it was more German than anything else; but—and here is the significant thing—it was strongly impregnated with English, Scotch, Irish and in some localities Scandinavian. Read Doddridge's *Notes* or Kercheval's *History of the Valley;* study the names in any directory in those regions to-day for proof of the great infusion of German blood among the pioneers who wrested the Appalachian valleys from the Indians and held them against the French.

Our Germans in Iowa were not pioneers. They were never covered-wagon people. But in that first great frontier, the most important in some ways which our country has had, the Germans pushed out into the wilds with their families. They built blockhouses and defended them against the savages. They fell before Indian attacks as they cultivated their fields, were scalped and burned at the stake; and then turning on their foes, hunted them to their death in the strangely cruel wars which all races indulged in on that outline of civilization. They furnished such frontier heroes as Lew Wetzel. And even in that era, the assimilation of all the races I have mentioned had begun in that region. It has gone on until no distinction can be made between the descendants of the various races. In fact the Americans of that region are a blend of all the original stocks. German, Irish, Scotch, British, Scandinavian and other races are literally melted together in the short space of a century and a half. I have seen Pennsylvania Germans named Oneil and Oharrow. The very names have been altered, and the original traditions and customs have been merged for all these nationalities into a homogeneous American character. The alloy of races has been formed, and is complete and perfect.

But those who lived their youth with me in Iowa do not need to refer to history for an example of racial assimilation. I have rather extendedly described the human elements which were thrown together into a human hash in our state, and from it time has cooked a dish of perfectly good Americanism.

Our German neighbors rapidly grew prosperous. They came in a marvelously short time to be excellent

farmers even under their new conditions. Their children went to the common schools, and especially along the margins of their settlements, mingled with the Yankee children, studied with them, played with them, fought with them; and American farmer changed work with German farmer, traded with him and with him discussed their common problems. Gradually the things in them which offended us disappeared, or were better understood and lost their offensiveness. They became used to us too.

With their ascent from the intellectual and economic status of European peasants to that of independent American farmers, they shed the practises entailed on them by their old poverty. This would have been inevitable no matter where it might have taken place. For a long time intermarriages between them and us were unknown. As time passed they became frequent. Costumes became identical. Our German friends soon abandoned their wooden shoes, and the German girl passed the stage of pulling up her skirts to get at the huge patchwork reticule which hung under her clothes from a belt around her waist. Dress, language, circles of acquaintance, politics, lodges, the common interest in roads and schools, farm organizations—a thousand things gradually produced forgetfulness of those early differences.

The German neighborhoods in Iowa are now as American as the rest of the country. I believe that the assimilation is actually more complete than in the more purely German counties of Pennsylvania, where the American residence has existed for the better part of two centuries. The melting pot does exist where the conditions are right—and it should exist.

Not that the mid-western immigrants from Europe have lost their racial traits. Of course not. They are still German or Scandinavian or Irish or Bohemian or what-not, where the blood has not been crossed with other strains, with all the inherent virtues and shortcomings which go with the race—whatever they are. But all Americans possess these peculiarities. They have ceased, however, to be divisive influences as between man and man, citizen and citizen, and neighborhood and neighborhood. They have become individual traits, and not mass traits. And having become such, they have ceased to be barriers to association in the various activities required by our comman American life. Such traits make neither for nor against the assimilation of peoples into common citizenship. The melting pot does not change the atoms of the citizenship. It merely adapts them into a good alloy.

There is no such assimilation as I have described as between the huge blocks of foreign populations which are planting themselves in our cities. I have seen the melting pot do its work in Iowa in my time, and in Minnesota and the Dakotas. No one living will see it do the same thing in Chicago or Pittsburgh or New York City. The conditions are not there that are necessary for assimilation. They did exist in the Cumberland-Shenandoah Valley in the last half of the eighteenth century, and in Iowa in the nineteenth.

It is the passing away of free land and land which was almost free which makes our immigration problem a grave one now. In other words, assimilation can take place rapidly when immigrants enter the rural life of their new home. The racial alloy will

not form successfully when the included race settles in large blocks which are merely broken-off fragments of Europe or Asia. And even under rural conditions, it will not form when the included group differs widely from our own population in color, or where it possesses a radically alien culture which it can not gradually abandon.

The physical appearance, the complexion of immigrants, have an importance which is neglected by thinkers and writers on the subject of immigration. The northern European races are the ones which assimilate most quickly for several reasons, one important one being that as soon as they adopt our costumes they can not be visually distinguished in any gathering. They blend into the human landscape. As we pass southward in Europe, to people of darker and darker complexion, we find them a bit more refractory in the melting pot. Armenians are still more difficult, not withstanding the fact that their religion offers no obstacles to assimilation.

In parts of New England the Portuguese seem to take on Americanism very slowly as compared with Scandinavians in the next town. Italians from the Po Valley are digested into Americanism more rapidly than are the Calabrians or Sicilians; Spaniards more quickly than Portuguese; French more quickly than Spaniards; Mexicans of the peon class, with their Indian blood, very slowly indeed. The presence of people of the same race already Americanized aids enormously in the melting, because they are accustomed to us and we to them. The principle on which our present immigration quotas are fixed is a correct one. It is only in details that it needs amendment.

Scientists are unable to agree that any race is superior to any other. Certainly, Chinese, Japanese and Hindus seem as human beings to be equal to Americans or any other race. But that does not mean that they are desirable elements. One chemical is as good in its place as another, but a mixture of two harmless and useful ones may explode or form a poison. These Asiatics have ineradicably stamped upon them the traits of their ancient civilizations and religions and habits; and their color and general personal appearance are such as to set them off in the minds of the common people of America as aliens, as something different.

It is not what we should think or do if we were all philosophers that counts. It is what our common people will inevitably think and do. Our people can not ignore this matter of color. The Latins seem more tolerant in this regard. Our prejudice may be a weakness on our part, or it may be a protective instinct against what the breeders call too much of an outcross. Anyhow, it exists.

If a Japanese could mingle with the average American company without attracting more attention than does an Italian, he would be much more promising material for the melting pot. Their sense of superiority to us, our sense of superiority to them—both errors, probably—plus our differing colors and features keep us apart and give a solemn warning that we should not attempt to mingle in the same population. Such mingling will surely form social poison or cause social explosion.

I have emphasized the clash of traits between our German neighbors and ourselves in Iowa. When I

come to speak of my boyhood associates, I shall give the Germans all the best of the comparison. I have shown that there were some things to harmonize in our differing characters in this irruption even of Nordic Protestants. These differences never led to anything like enmities. There was room on the land for all of us on tolerable terms. And the Iowa Germans have assimilated. The present generation of these formerly ignorant and superstitious peasants are blessed with all the virtues and cursed with most of the faults of average Americanism. They live in electrically lighted farm homes, have bathrooms, plumbing, telephones and radio sets; drive about in their motor-cars, struggle to make the farm pay on its recent monopoly values—or they have migrated to California where they live on their rents and sing the praises of their old home or explain why they can not live there. And the old home is Iowa, not Germany.

CHAPTER XIV

NEW FARMS AND NEW NEIGHBORS

The Hagen Place was sold. To the mind of the folks with generations of pioneer blood in their veins, what next? Why, a push westward, of course. The goods were again loaded into the wagon. In a driving rain we left the farm we had owned for so short a time. And here there is some indistinctness in my memory. I only remember that we were permitted to live for a part of one summer in the Place schoolhouse, where I had been initiated into that strange school; and that my father with two other men went west as far as Sioux City, "huntin' country," as my mother half humorously, half sarcastically called the search for a location. I remember his report on the country he saw.

At first they drove over the region of pond holes and muskrat houses, as he called it, between the Iowa River and the Missouri slope—Harding, Hamilton and Pocahontas Counties. After living for some years in that most perfect of all farming countries, Grundy County, Iowa, my father had become hard to please in the matter of land. None of the counties I have named would do at all. From somewhere in Pocahontas out past Cherokee, it was too gravelly. There was some good land in Plymouth and Woodbury Counties; but he said that when they had about decided on lands

in the Floyd River bottoms just out of Sioux City, he had himself, with rare detective ability, found drifted grass right up next to the bluff, and thus learned that the whole bottom was subject to overflow. And so he came back and bought another farm for exactly the same price per acre as that which he sold; and we were settled again in Grundy County three-quarters of a mile east of the very schoolhouse in District Number 9, Colfax Township, where we had been living that summer.

Thus my father threw away his chance to make profit on the land boom. He traveled over two hundred miles of land not yet reached by the boom, and which we have seen sold and resold since at hundreds of dollars an acre. The land on the Floyd bottoms just out of Sioux City, and even that in the lower hills, I have seen speculated in at hundreds of dollars a lot. When as a man I was practising law in Sioux City one of my first clients was a capitalist who had become such through the sale of a farm which may have been the very one my father rejected because of the dangers of the overflow—and which has since gone back into the richest farm land imaginable.

The country of pond holes and muskrat houses has become as thickly settled as any part of the West, and quite as productive. It has absorbed millions of tons of tile in drainage. In Humboldt County is a spot which was a lake when father passed through, "huntin' country"—the finest duck marsh one could wish for. Forty-five years or so after this the tow-headed youngster left by him in the Place schoolhouse, was in Washington, a member of the Federal Farm Loan Board, engaged in establishing land banks and making

a market for hundreds of millions of dollars of farm-loan bonds. His board was subjected to much criticism because the Federal Land Bank of Omaha had made the loans at the rate of well up to a hundred dollars an acre on the bed of this lake, and on a severe examination of the loans we pronounced them perfectly good. Father's foresight was nowhere as good as is our hindsight.

Even without the gift of prophecy, many men would have taken advantage of his situation in 1869 to secure cheap land for dearer, and thus stand to profit from future rises on land values. There were two types of mind among the pioneer farmers. One looked upon a farm as a means of making money from the rise in values. The other regarded it merely as a piece of soil out of which to produce a living for the family. The former expected to gain riches from the value which the growth of society gives to his land. The latter sought to make his living and that of his family from the fruits of his labor. I regard the former policy as fundamentally, though unconsciously, of course, anti-social. The latter is the impulse of the citizen who builds up society. The former has the better chance to get rich; but this is owing to certain maladjustments of society by which he profits; as he has a perfect legal and moral right to do.

My father belonged to the latter class. So did my Grandfather Coleman, and my Uncle Matt. Each of these latter bought forty-acre farms. My father got one of eighty acres. These seem like garden patches now, to the Iowa farmer; but they were the rule rather than the exception then. The making of profit from the rise in land values had not as yet entered the

minds of most of our people. My father's farm in Colfax Township had eighty-acre farms on three sides of it. One the other side was a quarter-section piece owned by a Chicago speculator. Half a mile to the east was a forty-acre farm. When I was eight years old I do not believe that the average farm in Grundy County which was worked by its owner was over a hundred acres in size. The average holding was much larger because of a few large farms and the big tracts owned by non-residents, and still lying in the state of open prairie to be used freely by us as meadows and pastures.

And though these forty-acre and eighty-acre farmers were poor, they made a living. They had food in plenty. They had clothes of a sort, and fuel for the winter. Their privations arose not from the scanty yields of their small farms but from general conditions. I never heard my father attribute our poverty to the fact that we had too little land. The farm was for a living, not a factor in speculation. These small farmers were as well educated as, or rather they were no more uneducated than, the men of broader acres. They had the same ideals, and the same ambitions. They had on the average quite as much of the pioneer's eagerness for the better chance in life for their children as the man who secured the big tracts. There was no social barrier between the families. The small holders differed from the others simply by not having been inoculated with the virus of land engrossing.

I am touching here upon a basic, formative influence in American, in human affairs—the conflict between life devoted to production and life adjusted to the acquisition of wealth through the holding of

The Old Court-House at Guilford Center.

monopoly of natural opportunities. I left this eighty-acre farm about the year 1880. More than forty years after, I saw it again for the first time. This gave me an unusual opportunity for observing the change wrought by the advance in land values, and the influence of that advance not only on the lives of the dwellers on the land but on the whole community in which I dwelt in childhood.

The eighty-acre farm of my father had become a half-section farm—one of four times its original size. The house had been nearly doubled in size. In the place of the stable made of crotches under a roof of straw, there was a barn standing on a cement foundation. It must have cost something like a thousand dollars—a good building, but with weathered paint and a look of neglect. The well, which when I had last seen it had a chain pump, was abandoned and filled up, and a deeper one had been sunk and provided with a good windmill. The lowering of the water level in the earth through the long cultivation of the land had made a deep well necessary. These, with better fences, were all the improvements which had been made in forty years. The rest of the story is one of deterioration in rural life.

The farm was occupied by a tenant. The owner lived "off somewhere," I was told—which may have meant in Grundy Center, in Waterloo, or more probably in California. As an eighty-acre farm it had had a beautiful lawn of blue grass about the house. Not a square yard of this lawn was left. All was knot-grass, weeds and foul growth. The eighty-acre farm had shapely cottonwood trees growing in trios east and west of the house, under which on the sod I used

to lie in the shade for my noonday and evening rest. Had these been allowed to stand they would have been dignified and beautiful trees of three or more feet in diameter. They had been cut down. All on the north and west sides of the house at a distance which left room for a fine garden and orchard within the half hollow square, there stood in my boyhood a grove of cottonwoods, maples and Lombardy poplars. We used to walk happily through these aisles admiring their thriftiness and beauty. On them we children learned tree climbing. They had all been cut down save the stunted and crooked ones. Probably the poplars had died of old age; but the cottonwoods must have been cut for lumber—probably for the dimension stuff in the barn and in the addition to the house.

When it had been our home, much had been done with loving effort to make it charming and homelike. We had martin houses on posts about the place, and with each renewal of the seasonal procession the twittering of their tenants came to our delighted ears as our assurance that summer had arrived. We grew to know the individual birds, and gave them names. But after forty years the birds had left the place where they were no longer loved and provided for. About the house my mother and others of the family had planted peonies, larkspur, lilies, flowering almond, lilacs—all the floral friends which render a country home intimately lovable. Not one of them was left except one clump of lilac bushes too hardy to succumb to trampling and neglect. The early Richmond cherry trees, from the fruit of which my mother and sisters had made so many delicious pies, and which were the subject of so many songs of thanksgiving from our

robins, were dead and gone—and none had been planted in their places. We had been noted for our small fruit—currants, gooseberries, grapes, and a dozen varieties of raspberries. The eighty-acre farm produced more of them than we could use. It loaded the buggies of our neighbors with them when they visited us. On the farm of four eighties I could find not a single bush or vine of them, though I looked painstakingly. Even the apple trees were gone, save for one or two crooked and stunted trees which seemed to have sprouted up from the roots of the old ones, and stood there like weeds among other weeds. And these trees and plants had not given way to better things or yielded to more practical and intensive cultivation. The old garden and orchard of the eighty-acre farm were fallen into neglect and uselessness because to the dwellers in our old house it was no longer home. It was a place where a family stayed and strove to pay the rent and to exist. I shall not comment further upon them. They were not to blame for the fact that the eighty-acre farm was a home, while the three-hundred-and-twenty-acre place was merely a place to work—to work in the main for some one else.

The reader in eastern America will think that thus far I have been describing an abandoned farm, and a piece of unprofitable property. Nothing could be further from the truth. The remarkable thing about this land is that the soil seems to have in no great degree deteriorated. I believe it grows better corn than when it was an eighty-acre farm—mainly because of better varieties and the better methods for which the great Iowa Agricultural College is largely responsible.

It is a marvelous soil—deep, black and rich. It is quite as well cultivated as when it was an eighty-acre farm. It must be; or returns could not be paid on anything like its great value. My father bought it for twenty dollars an acre, as I remember it. When I was looking over that sad, neglected, weedy-yarded, lawnless, fruitless ex-home, land had been selling in that very neighborhood for upward of five hundred dollars an acre. If that owner living "off somewhere" were to receive anything like average commercial returns on this value, the tenant had to pay yearly in rent as much as or more than my father paid for a fee-simple deed to the land—and the tenant had to pay this on four times as much land. So far from being an abandoned farm similar to those we find in New England and other Atlantic Coast States, the farm was one the value of which had soared and soared until the boom was a national financial problem with which I had just before been coping as a member of the Federal Farm Loan Board, which was called upon to supervise the loaning of money on these very values.

The trouble with this tenant and this community lay in the fact that their lands were too valuable. They were and still are so valuable that their owners are leaving them to live "off somewhere" and relying on their tenants for work and income. As for this tenant, he has not one chance in ten thousand of ever earning and saving enough to enable him to buy one of these farms. In fact, it would not pay him to do so if he could. The value is too high for adequate returns to the owner. The lands are swiftly passing into the hands of those who are willing to carry them for one reason or another, on the very low interest

rate with which such investors must perforce be content. These reasons are partly the dignity which comes from such ownership; but mainly from a feeling that no matter what a man pays for good land, it is sure to increase in value. This is a deep-rooted feeling in good farming regions. And it is what is dividing the society of all such regions into the land-owning and the landless classes. It is destroying homes and putting places-to-stay in their stead. It is sifting rural society by leaving on the farms as tenants those who have not the intelligence or the enterprise to get into the towns and cities. It is effecting a fundamental change in American rural society.

It militates against better rural schools. In my native county there are some fine consolidated rural schools. In the district of the former eighty-acre farm, school is kept in the same schoolhouse that stood there when I walked across the prairies barefooted on the gopher mounds to weep myself into admission; and to receive all the schooling of any formal sort which I was ever to have. On its walls are the very same boards in the nailing of which Uncle David Robinson made such a botch of his carpentry. I made no effort to find out what proportion of the families in this district are tenants; but I am willing to wager from the state of the schoolhouse alone that they predominate. To them that have shall be given, and to them that have not shall be taken away the school facilities they have. Such is the rule of Scripture in regions devoted to tenant farming.

Of course the population decreases under such conditions. The more valuable the land the fewer people it directly supports. The machine takes the place of

labor. Extensive farming must supplant intensive—or rather make it impossible for the intensive to develop. In my old district, the Nutbrook farm and the Rice farm have been consolidated with our old place, and one dwelling takes the place of three. And the dwellers on the large farms are not living as comfortable lives as did we on the small farms of the days nearer to pioneer times. We were poor; but we had more hope. And after we began to depart from wheat growing and depend more on live stock, we lived lives of rather restricted plenty. We had fruits, milk, eggs, and tables spread with everything that the appetite required. Our poverty was of a different sort from that of the present-day tenant who drives to town in his flivver to the movies and listens to the radio at night, and seems at first glance to have so many things which were beyond the reach of even the well-to-do in my boyhood days.

The decline of rural population is concealed from us in the report of the census. First, the number of actual farmers in such a state as Wisconsin, for instance, is kept up by the opening of the small farms in the cut-over regions, where pioneer conditions still persist. Second, the population of the small towns is not separated from that of the farms. And the small towns are largely made up of retired farmers, who constitute one side of the equation of the rural problem. If we had the actual working farmers in a list by themselves, we could see the tendency more clearly. The Census Bureau should be required to give us this information.

I speak of a rural problem. It is only a part of a problem covering our whole society, but it has its

distinctive rural phases. What, I should like to say, may we expect if this division of our farm population goes on with the landless gaining on the land-owning classes? The coming problem in all countries which are civilized is the growth of the belief that the government can save the people by controlling their work and their living. To my mind this is the greatest error into which men ever fell. Governments must always be inefficient in directing the labor of individuals. Successful living and working are too intricate things for a government to manage. The making of a living, the selling and buying of commodities, the manufacturing of them, are not so much matters of general theory and intellectual organization, as of instinct and the reaction of the individual mind to matters of hourly, daily and yearly contact. We do many things wisely for no reason to which we can give expression. Government can not control these things without disaster. All it should do is to find out the extent to which our laws give certain ones of us the power to take unjustly from others, to remove these injustices, and then leave us free to work out our own salvation, with such education as it can give us.

When government tries to do more than this it puts one disastrous control over us, and may not remove the other. When it tries even with the best intentions to put itself in the place of the deep-seated instincts which govern our lives, it acts as absurdly as would a person who, if given the choice of living with all his vital processes under control of his brain, or of his involuntary vital organs, should say, "I will put the beating of my heart, the digestion of my food, the action of my muscles, all my body's functions under

the control of my brain." His brain would make such a mess of it that he would die in half an hour—probably in half a minute. The task set would be too complicated for it. There was a man once who could by his will control the beating of his heart. He controlled it once too often, and died. So society would die if it succeeded in putting the functions of production and distribution under the social brain, the government. This is the fundamental error of Marx, Lenine, and the socialists generally.

But this error is one which is natural to some minds. There is the organically socialistic mind which believes in the control of the involuntary processes of society by the brain. They are very intelligent minds, many of them. But the danger of Bolshevism or some modification of it does not lie for us in such minds, except as the danger of bubonic plague lies in rats. The danger lies in the existence of a large class of people who feel that they have nothing to lose by the destruction rather than by the benign modification of the present order. Hitherto the farmers have been the sheet anchor of our society against revolution. They have been immune not only to the infection of the rats of the intellect but often also to the beneficent yeast plant of progressive ideas.

This status of the farmers is changing with the growth of farm tenantry. Wherever it has grown so as to include a majority of them, we see among them symptoms of a tendency to follow off any strange god that promises them relief. Why not? What, they feel, have they to lose? And so much is promised! Is it not well within the possible for a time to come in the not very distant future when the proletariat of

the farms will join with the proletariat of the cities to control the country in the belief that the governmental brain will have the power and the will to take over everything and successfully run it? If this happens we shall lose all we have gained in our struggle out of barbarism, or we shall be in great danger of losing it. I have seen this tendency go a great way in Iowa and the Midwest and the South. I have not seen the end of it. I should like to direct the intelligent minds of readers to a problem in the solution of which they and their children have a vital interest.

CHAPTER XV

MY SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

The very schoolhouse in which our family lived while awaiting the vacating of our new residence was to be our educational home thenceforward. The agony of hermit children at a new birth into a new society was not to be repeated. My old companion in punishment at the hands of that excellent if strict schoolmistress, Maggie Livingstone, came there to pay me a visit.

"You ought to keep this," said he, picking up a bit of smoky glass in the schoolhouse yard. "There's goin' to be a toad eclipse next week, and you'll need a smoked glass to look at it through."

It was a total eclipse of the sun to which Charley referred, my mother said. "Total," "toad," and "eclipse" were terms then equally obscure to me; but I remember the eclipse very well. As I write this, the scientific world is hoping for clear weather for the 1925 eclipse next Saturday. The one in Iowa in 1869 would have been a fine one for observations of the coronæ, the prominences, and for the verification of the Einstein hypothesis—if they had been under study then—as some of them may have been, for all I know. It came about the middle of the afternoon. I remember how the darkness came on like a wall, how the birds and beasts hastily did their evening chores and

retired, how the stars came out; and then dawned a supernumerary morning. It was a wonder that I shall never forget.

In this humble building I had much more in the way of high adventure. While still an outsider attending school there on sufferance, I had won fame when I was six going on seven. I had had my first serious love affair, which remains until now quite unknown to fame, immediately after we had palely wept ourselves into membership in that school. The fame I won through my prodigious accomplishments. Do not smile. What fame can exceed that which extends to every one? Mine did this—to every one I cared about. My Fifth Reader and huge Monteith's and McNally's Geography gave me a sort of patent of nobility at once. Then I could spell anything. I could pronounce the long words in spelling book, reader or geography convincingly if not correctly. I was, up to a certain point, an animated dictionary, and was passed around, opened and used as such.

I was seated on the teacher's left away down in front, where my small feet might reach the floor. The girls sat on the right. As I look back at this arrangement I am reminded of a visit I once paid to the legislature of the Far Eastern Republic in Siberia at Vladivostok, in which the conservative bourgeoisie sat on the extreme right—as did the girls in District Number 9—while the members of the anarchist group, still more extreme than the Bolshevists, were on the left, where we Iowa boys were placed. Charley Robinson and I were in the place of the black flag, while Allen Boone and Melville Gleason had the territory of the Reds. This seems appropriate if, as I think,

the female of the species is really the conservative force in society. Many people think that the mature Me belongs rather far over to the left—but I deny this.

In the positions taken in the Place Schoolhouse by the liberals in Siberia—and of course over on the right—sat a wonderful creature named Martha Crippen—a big dashing lass of twice my age, who was always in difficulty with tasks which were easy for me. I was almost stricken dumb one day, when the teacher said to me that I might go over on the girls' side and help Martha get her lesson—geography or history. I have sometimes since gone over to the right for similar purposes. Now the girls' side was an alien, a remote and a forbidden world to us boys; and as for me, I was always ill at ease when required even to stand next a girl in class, with my bare toes at the crack in the floor which fixed our alignment. The fact that all the girls in my classes—and they were very few—were big girls was somehow comforting to me. There was less danger of being plagued about them.

So, blushingly, with bowed face, I partly edged and was partly pushed over to Martha's seat; and then and there began my long career as a teacher of one sort or another. Before the schoolday ended, my scandalous breach of the proprieties had ceased to receive its just condemnation from the "scholars"—so insidious is the creeping in of abuses. As I bounded Louisiana, told the capitals and metropolises of New England, and helped memorize the respective numbers of Lee's and Meade's armies at Gettysburg, my pride rose in the exercise of my proficiency. Such words

Elbert Quick. Orison Quick.
Fred Quick. Charles Quick.

Half-brothers of Herbert Quick on the father's side.

as Winnepesaukee and Memphremagog held no terrors for me. Under the inspiration of Martha's propinquity I should have tackled boldly Lake Chaubunagungamaug—which is, I believe, a small lake in Massachusetts. I was another Memorus Wordwell, Martha needed me, and she won my young heart. She not only did this, but she gave me my first sensation of superiority. I could not outrun or throw down the other boys, or even the girls—but I could spell them down. This gave me, in a double sense, standing in the school; and though it soon became something taken for granted—for genius is never long a matter of local remark—this triumph, this winning of popular applause, this conquest of fame was, I feel sure, one of the most formative events in my life. It bent the twig. The tree still feels the resultant inclination. It was, seriously, no small thing.

Martha was doubtless guiltless of any flirtatious intentions, but she did for me completely. I never told my love, and nothing like a worm i' the bud fed on my chapped and peeling cheek; for one can scarcely expect a six-year-old lover to lose his appetite; but I felt the divine passion as distinctly as I have ever done. I meant to marry Martha Crippen. I had roseate visions of life with her. Time passed. Martha grew up to the age of beaux and soft dalliance, while I was still no higher than the plow handles—a white-headed little nobody.

How I hated those lovers of hers! The worst blow was the dangling about her for a short time of an elder brother of mine. He would have been astonished at the bitterness of my feeling toward him. If Martha is still living and reads this, she may add to her string

the little fellow who helped her with her lessons so very long ago.

I can see her as she looked then. I can remember the very pages of the books we studied—especially that spelling lesson beginning with the word "evident" and the other in which "hallalujah" was spelled in three ways. Her eyes sparkled with fun or darkened with anger as she slapped the chaps of any boy up to her age who angered her; for while Martha was a congenital flirt she was not always gentle. Her hair was dark, and hung down in a braid which sometimes, carrying a bit of soiled red ribbon with it, dragged bewitchingly across the page as we traced the Amazon to its source. Her cheeks were rosy under their nut-brown tan; and the calico dress which concealed her budding charms was a robe as mystic and wonderful as the white samite of the Lady of the Lake. She was a rude, forward, difficult little minx, and one altogether bewildering; but I was for a while her true knight, devoted because she accepted my servitude. Gradually I came to see that she was not for me, the iron entered into my soul and came out again—as such irons will; and after she was married to some villain whose name I forget, and came to the house calling one day, I sighfully admitted to myself that perhaps it was just as well. Such love affairs of infant life constitute a rich but perhaps unworkable field for the psychoanalyst; but, good heavens! They have too many fields already!

The manners in our school and on our playground were rude and uncultivated—almost as bad as I now see on the Boul' Mich', as B. L. T. dubbed it, or on Fifth Avenue. It used to be the fashion to magnify

the dangers encountered by the girls and boys of the cities in growing up—the manifold temptations, the evil companionships into which it was so easy to slip. It was thought quite different in the country. Rural simplicity was supposed to make for a virtuous life. We had this delusion in our family. I have often wondered what city boy ever had more evil associates than did I out there on the prairie. There were good boys in our vicinity, but it so happened that, save for the sons of the German immigrants, I was not often thrown into intimate association with them. The simple innocence of the Deserted Village was absent.

The frontier drew all sorts of people, and had its own temptations. Boys of excellent parentage sometimes went wrong through the successive breaking up of ties which went with our frequent migrations as the frontier moved from region to region. Whole communities went wrong sometimes. I call to mind one little town which was settled by the usual mixture of good and bad. It had active churches and its full quota, apparently, of people of honor and probity. No one could have said in 1867 that it was not as good a community as any other of the new towns scattered about the country. Yet this community literally went to hell. It became a sort of back-country slum. In a peculiar way, the first generation of the life of a frontier community lives in a time which tries the souls, not only of men and women but of communities and of boys. Such things occur in older societies, but in this matter, as in many other respects, events in a new country follow one another more quickly. This community went to hell; and was finally redeemed by the fact that it was eventually

repeopled by the German immigrants who brought their own higher morality with them, and were very largely immune to the moral contagion of the place.

The boy with whom I played most, and whom I liked for his sense of humor, developed into a village drunkard, and, after a dreadful debauch, committed suicide in a town far from the old home. He had already started down the great slide at the age of ten. How a boy of that age could have had more vices I can not imagine.

At the age of eighteen or so another of my associates wandered away in the pioneer fashion, and the word came back to us that he had met death in a mob scene in the Indian Territory; and there were two stories as to the end of the rope at which he died. Another boy with whom I played a good deal stole a watch and, escaping from the sheriff, vanished and was never heard of more. I remember the address with which he used to steal prunes and raisins and cookies from his mother's pantry while talking with her through the doorway. I had a sort of admiration for his felonious coolness, as I shared the loot with him out on the prairie or in the barn. It was in a way an exhibition of true artistry.

For a season a boy who was taken by a near neighbor from the Soldiers' Orphans' Home in Cedar Falls was my playmate. From him I learned of that hypocrisy which goes with institutional life; or which at least seems the usual fruit of subjection. Among his elders this boy pretended to be very pious and extremely innocent. With an expression of saintly innocence he asked questions on very risqué topics, while Mrs. Howland or Mrs. Rice, her daughter,

evaded the reply. He fervently sang hymns. His work in the family was that of herd boy. A smaller boy from the village was hired to assist him. The big fellow tortured the small boy fiendishly, beating him, forcing him to eat filth, frightening him against making any complaint; and lavishing loving attentions upon him in the presence of witnesses. The smaller boy succeeded in getting away at last, and exposed the bully, who as a consequence changed homes and employment. Fully a year afterward, the latter went with his new employer to Steamboat Rock, where the smaller boy lived. He saw his former tormentor, sent out to his boy friends the call for help, and as the older boy passed along a rather lonely way the Steamboat Rock boys surrounded him and delivered him over to his young friend for punishment. The big boy went home a beaten, mauled and bloody wreck. I learned about evil from 'im.

An older boy moved into our neighborhood when I was about fourteen, and became my companion in shooting and fishing. He would come to our farm and work like a beaver helping me with my stint so that we might take our fishing tackle or guns and wander off, seeking what we might find. There was much in his personality which was agreeable; but I knew all the time that he was fundamentally worthless—or worse. After I had become a lawyer he came with another man's wife to my town, committed a theft or two, and vanished. So much for him as a simple rural influence.

A fifth among my small circle of friends ran away, as we called his disappearance; and his respectable parents never heard from him again. I was getting

well on toward middle age when I happened to be the guest of this family. There was a place laid at table for one more than the company; but nothing was said of this. I found out afterward that his mother had always kept sacred a place at table for the boy who had run away; so that if he should return he would find that he was expected and provided for. The mother's love could not tolerate the abandonment of this hope.

Now if I had lived in the worst slum in any city I could not have had associates more evil than were these boys. Their language was unspeakably profane. Blasphemy was used, not for the expression of passion, but as a part of the vocabulary of ordinary conversation. Yet, in spite of that very early excursion of mine into swearing, I did not, as I grew older, adopt their style of speech. I went with these boys, played with them, and knew them for what they were; but so far as I can see I took little harm from them. They seemed to be mere phenomena, like the weather, interesting but nothing to imitate.

This ability to walk in a sort of fiery furnace without much scorching of the garments—I won't say with none—was possible for me because of the inflexible moral rectitude of my parents, and the atmosphere of fundamental righteousness in which we were bathed at home. On the surface, at least, it was not a religious atmosphere, though we all felt a basis of religion in the characters of our parents. We never had any religious family services, never had the blessing asked at the table, and none of us were ever baptized until such as chose to do so became church communicants in later life—which never took place

with me. It was rather an indwelling spirit of integrity in the family, a conclusive presumption that the way marked out for us to follow was not the way for any reasons of mere comformity to the rest of the world.

My course as to these by and forbidden paths of my playmates involved no resistance to temptation of which I was or am conscious. There was no temptation in them. A virtuous father and mother had made for us a tacit declaration of principles of which this text from Joshua is the best verbal expression of which I know: "And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose lands ye dwell; but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

This may sound sanctimonious, but there was no sanctimony in it, no preaching or pleading—just living. Was it heredity or environment? Certainly my boy playmates were environment. The family was partly the one and partly the other. And it is in the influence of the family that neither glance of eye, thought of man nor wing of angel can divide the influence of heredity from that of environment. Personally, I believe that if any average child had been brought up in our family in ignorance on his part and on the part of parents, brothers and sisters, that he was an adoptive child, he would have behaved as did we. In other words, that most powerful of all influences in perpetuating character through the family is, I believe, more a result of family environment than of true heredity.

As for the boys of evil lives, they and their families are no longer in that community. Most, if not all of them, were absorbed as they grew up by the cities and towns. They were not of the sort of people who take root in country life. They came like water, and like wind they went. I may assure that community that these boys, it so happens, each and every one of them moved away from the neighborhood and disappeared many years ago. As the community developed they found themselves ill at ease, and went to towns or sought a new frontier. Their farms went to other people, and the drifters floated away in the mysterious eddies and swirls of American life. The washings of a flowing society, they passed out of the community with the current as they washed in. No dweller in that old community should think that I am here disparaging its origins. I am simply stating the facts.

CHAPER XVI

MY DEBT TO THE MCGUFFEY BROTHERS

One of the characters of a present-day humorist is a pet frog in the Arizona desert. Seven years old and with never a glimpse of water. If I chose to exaggerate only a little, I might compare the child with whom we are dealing, with this frog. I had a burning thirst for books and art, and those spiritual things which we used to be taught are most easily approached through books and education; and the rather primitive life which I have described was in these things a desert—with few oases. We had very little stark illiteracy; but that coldness toward books, that absence of love for them which is worse, was almost universal. My father never read anything. My mother was passionately fond of reading; but we had no books,—she had no skill in them and no time for anything save the drudgery of the farm and the care of the children.

And most of the people about were even more remote from the world of letters than we—for in few families was there even one person who cared much for the printed page. On those farms a boy or girl born with my appetite for literature was a pet frog in a desert. The pet frogs went about, parched with the prairie air, their spiritual skins unmoistened by any plunge into their proper element, their yearnings

for lily pads and algæ impelling them to all sorts of strange and undesert-like behavior, until in most cases they were molded by their environment into mere dry-land toads. Some of them, I suspect, became horrible horned toads.

Yet, I must not exaggerate. It was not quite so bad as that in my case; I am always assuming that my case is so far typical that it is worth describing as part of a once important phase of our national life. So I shall tell of a bookish boy in a bookless home in a bookless society; a life which without any schooling save that of his uncommonly common school has led to a career devoted in a large part to literary creation.

None of my teachers, with one exception, had any literary attainments. Of course they could read, write, cipher, and tell whether or not we had memorized the simple texts of our school-books. Our schools were created by the society they served. Our teachers were our own boys and girls. Teachers we must have, and as the supply of educated ones was not sufficient for even the villages and towns, we taught ourselves through the use of such members of society as were thought competent. I have in years not long past had letters from elderly men and women who held certificates as teachers in the schools when I was young. They were the letters of persons just above the plane of illiteracy. Yet, they did a most important work in education.

Self-educated persons are not seldom met; but who has sung the praises of a self-educated society? What a marvelous thing it was for a great, primitive, newly gathered, democratic, independent, self-reliant, uncultured people like that of the Middle West in

America, to grapple with the task of educating itself; and, sublimely ignorant of its incapacity, go blunderingly on to such success as it has achieved! We had no Plato to bestow on us a philosophy of education for a ruling class in a state based on the enslavement of a mass of helots; no Lycurgus to put us in a straight-jacket of training in which the state was all and the individual nothing, no Frederick William to decree a Prussian plan of universal education; and if any such had appeared among us we should have instantly rebelled against him.

A hundred years ago both this country and Great Britain were aroused to a deep interest in the Lancastrian system of education, in which most of the teaching was done by monitors, or pupil teachers. The children taught one another. Well, though we were quite unaware of it, our whole system in Iowa was a sort of Lancastrian system. We instructed one another. A whole society was taught by those who, figuratively, and often literally, studied at night the lessons they taught next day, and did their whole duty by keeping one lesson ahead of their pupils. There has never been anything like it in the history of any country but this. The weaknesses of the system are obvious. Its merits in uplifting the whole community by making education a thing to be mastered, to be paid for by self-levied taxes, in making the welfare of the schools an obligation of every citizen instead of a ruling class or person, have not often been recognized. Those illiterate teachers were the rudimentary organs, formed by the society out of its own flesh and blood, which have developed into colleges and universities with troops of professors and doc-

tors. Poor and inefficient as they were, I speak of them with reverence.

To two farmer boys born, one in Washington County, Pennsylvania, and the other in Ohio, I owe my first taste of good literature. They were William and Alexander McGuffey, the authors respectively of the First and Fifth Eclectic Readers, and the Fifth Reader of the edition of 1844. These were the standard school readers of my day; except that the 1844 Fifth Reader, or McGuffey's Rhetorical Guide, had been found too difficult, not only for the pupils but for the teachers of the community. My copy of it was an old dog's-eared volume left by my brother Orison when he left for Pike's Peak. These text-books constitute the most influential volumes ever published in America. They were our most popular reading books for generations—and for anything I know in their present form—they may be still. They had a spirit of their own, compilations as they were. And it was, in spite of much that was British in selections and illustrations, the spirit of America at its best.

And no wonder. The father of the McGuffey brothers was a pioneer in western Pennsylvania. He was a scout in the Indian wars during and succeeding the Revolution, and was selected for scouting service because he was the fastest runner, the best rifleman and the wisest warrior in the forces. William McGuffey's mother was praying aloud in her garden one day, when a man passed who was connected with an academy. Prayer was heard in that case, by the passer-by anyhow. He heard this pioneer mother praying for an education for her son. He saw to it that William had his chance to attend an academy

where his tuition cost the sum of three dollars a year, and his board seventy-five cents a week. This was in the Old Stone Academy at Darlington, Pennsylvania, and the man who heard Mrs. McGuffey's prayer was the head and the owner of it, the Reverend Thomas Hughes. William McGuffey and his brother Alexander were the authors of the school readers I studied in school and read at home. Sons of such a mother, of such a father, and of the log cabin, filled with their sublime faith—sublime even if a little naif and mistaken—in education as a redemptive force, not only for the individual but for society, with family traditions steeped in the sufferings, the pleasures and the conflicts of the old frontier, they could not fail after they had become possessed of a rather comprehensive and liberal scholarship, to instill into their text-books a soul very much *en rapport* with the aspirations of a boy like myself.

I have just looked at a copy of a twenty-year-old edition of the McGuffey's First Reader. It has not a single lesson that was in the one I took in my trembling hand when Maggie Livingstone called me to her to begin learning my letters. Mine had a green cover; but it was hidden by the muslin which my mother had stitched over it to save the wear on a book that cost thirty cents. It was filled with illustrations which I now know were of British origin; for all the men wore knee breeches, the girls had on fluffy pantalets and sugar-scoop bonnets, and the ladies huge many-flounced skirts. One boy had a cricket bat in his hand; and the ruling passions of the youngsters seemed to be to shoot with the bow and to roll the hoop. "Can you hop, Tom? See, I

can hop! Tom, hop to me." How easily does the English language lend itself to early lessons of such simplicity!

These books were intensely moral, soundly religious, and addicted to the inculcation of habits of industry, mercy and most of the virtues. Lucy was exhorted to rise because the sun was up. "Mary was up at six," she was assured; and then was added the immortal line, "Up, up, Lucy, and go out to Mary"; which scoffers perverted to "Double-up, Lucy." Most of the words were of one syllable; but "How doth the little busy bee" was in it, I am certain; and "I like to see a little dog and pat him on the head." It was an easy book, and if it fell short of the power in the moral and religious fields of the more advanced volumes,—why, so did its students in the practise of the vices and the need for reproof or warning.

My mastery of the First and Second Readers—just the opening of the marvels of the printed page—was a poignant delight. The reading of anything gave me a sort of ecstasy. These books did not, however, set in operation the germinant powers of actual literary treasure-hunting. They did give to the mind of the writer and to the world some things of universal knowledge. We learned that George Washington could not tell a lie about the cherry tree; and that his father proved to him the existence of God by the device of sowing lettuce in a trench which spelled George's name. "It might have grown so by chance," said the elder Washington in this Second Reader lesson; but George saw clearly that it could not have come by chance. Some one sowed those seeds in that way. And his father assured him that

face bright with conscious love of truth, he bravely cried out, "I can't tell a lie, father; you know I can't tell a lie. I cut it with my hatchet."

11. "Come to my arms, my dearest boy!" cried his father, in transports; "come to my arms! you killed my cherry-tree, George, but you have now paid me for it a thousand-fold. Such proof of heroic truth in my son, is of more value than a thousand trees, though they were all of the purest gold."

QUESTIONS. 1. What is this story about? 2. Who was George Washington? 3. What did Mr. Washington take great pains to do? 4. Did George attempt to conceal what he had done? 5. What should we always do when we have done wrong? 6. How did George's father feel towards him when he had confessed his fault? 7. What did he say to him?

LESSON LXII

dai'-ly	heav'-en	weak'-ness	com-pas'-sion
hum'-ble	hal'-low	king'-dom	tempt-a'-tions
par'-don	boun'-ty	por'-tion	trans-gres'-sions

STORY ABOUT GEORGE WASHINGTON.

1. GEORGE WASHINGTON'S father one day prepared a bed of earth in the garden, near George's favorite walk.

2. In this he wrote, with a small stick, the name of his son, "George Washington," at full length, and filled the letters with cabbage-seed.

3. This being done, he carefully smoothed over the bed, and waited for the seed to come up.

4. In a few days the plants appeared, and there was to be seen, in living green—in nature's own writing—the name of "GEORGE WASHINGTON."

5. As George was taking his favorite walk in the garden, either trundling his wagon, or riding his prancing horse, his eye caught a sight of the wonder.

6. He stopped and gazed—he spelt the name—he hesitated and doubted, and read again; he never saw such a wonder before—he never heard of any such thing—he could not believe his eyes; yet it was so.

7. He stayed not long, but bounded away towards the house, and soon stood in the presence of his father.

this world of wonderful adaptations could not have come as it has by chance. There were many fables, and lessons about insects, birds and beasts. Most of the scenes were British. Our habits, our morals and our faith were carefully kept in mind; and we grew to know Mary's Lamb by heart.

In the Third Reader, Mr. McGuffey began to give to my young mind some tastes of real literature. It had several beautiful selections from the Bible. Croly's description of the burning of the amphitheatre at Rome, which I have never run across anywhere since, was one of the lessons. There was an analysis of How a Fly Walks on the Ceiling, which gave me as much of an urge toward natural philosophy as if it had been a correct one—which it was not. One gets a glimpse into the McGuffey character from the treatment which the Indian received in these books. The author, whose father was an Indian fighter of renown, and who must have sat entranced at fireside stories of Indian wars, in several lessons in these readers treated the Indian with great respect. There was Logan's great speech in the Fifth, for instance. I can see it before my eyes still: "I appeal to any white man to say, if ever he entered Logan's cabin hungry, and he gave him not meat: if ever he came cold and naked and he clothed him not." And then: "I had even thought to have lived with you, but for the injuries of one man. Colonel Cresap the last spring, in cold blood and unprovoked, murdered all the relations of Logan, not even sparing my women and children."

By this time I was strongly pro-Indian, and Logan's boast that he had sought vengeance and

glutted it, was justified to me by the sentence, "There runs not a drop of my blood in the veins of any living creature." I was exalted by his assertion that he was now for peace, but not through fear. "Logan never felt fear," he insists. "He would not turn upon his heel to save his life. Who is there to mourn for Logan?—Not one!" I wonder how much of the persistent sentiment among Americans favoring justice to the Indians comes from these old readers. It has not saved the race from exploitation and oppression; but it has always persisted, and it has done much good.

There were at least two lessons in the Third Reader which could never, never be admitted into any school reader now. One was the poem which began with "How big was Alexander, pa, that people call him great?" It had in it the lines, "If killing people made him great, then why was Abdel Young, who killed his neighbor training day, put into jail, and hung?" And further on the boy told pa that if he ever killed a man, he'd kill a hundred more; "I should be great, and not get hung like Abdel Young before." Whereupon he was assured that killing men in war was somehow different—but was not satisfied with the explanation. This poem would now be cast into outer darkness as a pacifist utterance. Then there was the universally familiar poem of *Meddlesome Mattie,* who tugged open her grandma's snuff-box, and "the snuff came puffing in her face!"—How we giggled at the picture—"In vain she ran about for ease; she could do nothing else but sneeze." We should be horrified now at the very idea of grandma's taking snuff. Of course we may be approaching the day

when the readers may safely deal with grandma's cigarettes or her cocktails; but probably not, probably not. Our hypocrisy is so much better organized now.

The Third Reader introduced me to such writers as Croly, Irving, Woodworth, through *The Old Oaken Bucket;* Scott and others, but not by their names. In the Fourth we had William Wirt, Wendell Phillips, Lord Bacon, Eliphalet Nott, Addison, Samuel Rogers in his *Ginevra,* Willis, Montgomery, Milton and Shakespeare, Campbell, and a variety of lesser and anonymous authors. The Fifth Reader carried me on to longer and more mature selections, all chosen by the same rules—the rules of gradually introducing the child to the best of English literature with no letting down of the requirements as to morality and religious sentiment. There was more of Shakespeare, some of Byron, Milton, Johnson, Bryant, Addison, more of the Bible and much British matter now lost—to me at least. Every selection was classic English.

These five volumes were, however, tarnished by daily use in the school room. "We must educate, we must educate," ran a sentence in the Fifth, "or we perish in our own prosperity!" This was a terrifying and portentous outburst when I first heard or read it, but when I heard it droned from the class, term after term: "We—must——I can't pernounce that, teacher." "Well, spell it, Johnny." "E-d-u-c-a-t-e." "Or we purrish—in our own—our own—our own——" Well, after a term or so of that, the little chap listening drifted into the mood of being willing to take chances on perishing, especially through prosperity. The first fine careless rapture was droned off.

But the old Fifth Reader of 1844 we never used in our school. My brother's copy was a wonderful mine for me. The front cover was gone, and a part of the Rhetorician's Guide; which told us when to let our voices fall, when they should rise, and when the circumflex was required. I never regretted the loss. But the text consisted of some hundreds of pages of closely printed selections made by Alexander McGuffey with all the family judgment and taste. There was Pope with *Hector's Attack on the Grecian Walls,* from that version of the Iliad of which a critic said, "A very pretty poem, Mr. Pope, but don't call it Homer!" There was *How the Water Comes Down at Lodore.* There was oratory—Pitt, Burke, Fox, Barré, Otis, Adams, Webster, Hayne. I had the volume all to myself. There were months when it was my only resource in my favorite dissipation of reading.

Two questions which it put in my mind have never been answered. Who was the writer along in the 'forties who wrote under the pseudonym of Gold Pen? Some of his—or her—verses were in this old Fifth Reader. Was it some genius who afterward blazed forth under his own name, or was aborted back into obscurity? Or was it McGuffey's wife, whose stuff he just had to put in? And the other puzzle is the fact that in the McGuffey selection from *All's Well That Ends Well* the delightful braggart Parolles has his name changed to Delgrado. "Rust, sword! Cool, blushes! and Delgrado, live!" is the version which always occurs to my mind. Why did the McGuffey Reader call this character by a name different from that given him by the Bard of the Old Globe Theater who created him? Was it from some stage version which I have never seen? A fool question like this,

not in itself of the slightest importance, always gives me a sense of uneasiness—and I have had these two with me for at least fifty-three years.

A small ration, these McGuffey Readers, for an omnivorous mind; but by no means a negligible one. I did not use them with any intelligence. I simply enjoyed them. I found a tune to which I could sing Browning's *How They Brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix,* and sang it at the top of my voice as I followed my cows or the plow or harrow. I shouted *Ivry* to the vastnesses of the prairie. I deepened my boyish voice to orotund on "Now god-like Hector and his troops descend," and "They tug, they sweat, but neither gain nor yield, one foot, one inch of the contested field!"

And somehow I was inoculated with a little of the virus of good literature. I gained no knowledge that it was anything of the sort. I got not the slightest glimpse into the world of letters as a world. Nobody ever said a word to me about that. I read nothing about it for years and years afterward. But when I did come to read the English classics, I felt as one who meets in after years a charming person with whom he has had a chance encounter on the train. I had already met the gentlemen. I could say as I opened my Shakespeare, my Milton or my Byron, "Why, don't you remember our meeting away back on the farm in that old book with the front cover torn off? Here's this passage in which the little prince appeals to Hubert de Burgh not to burn out his eyes with those hot irons! I haven't read it yet, but I'll just repeat it from memory. You're no stranger to me. I don't know much of you, but what I do know I know well!"

CHAPTER XVII

MORE GRIST FOR MY MILL

There is a school of writers much in print, and some of them in vogue recently, who have set themselves to the analysis and description of country, village and town communities, with the purpose in mind of displaying to the world their—the localities', not the writers'—sordid drabness, their utter poverty of inspiration, their lack of men and women above the plane of two-legged hogs and cattle.

There are too many such in all human societies; but I have spent a good deal of my life in such communities, and I have never failed from time to time and at important crises in my life to make contact with the souls who led me outward and upward. One of our geniuses in gloom, if any such has read this history so far, will be sure that there was no source of light for me in those days. But they are looking for darkness. I, without knowing it, was looking for light. Now the one search is as one-sided as the other; and when it comes to the artist's task, brings forth work just as faulty. But I was not then an artist—if I have ever been one. At the very moment when I was devouring greedily the first course of the scanty meal provided by my school literature, there came into our lives a person to whom I have owed much.

I remember him merely as a man with a full beard whom I saw only a few times. I suppose I was five years old when he swam into our ken. He swam in from the West on the flood of returning gold hunters from Colorado. There he had met and formed a friendship for relatives of ours. They also had returned to Iowa; and when the stream of disappointment set back across the plains through Omaha to the other states, he came and visited them.

He had been a rover, and was, I suspect, alienated from his family. He had been a Mississippi steamboat captain. He was an ardent spiritualist; the messages received through rappings and automatic writings were to him much more than Gospel truth, and the materializations perfectly genuine. Moreover, he was a free lover. He believed in the communal system of the Oneida Community. I have heard dark hints that he made tentative suggestions that our circle, consisting of a number of families, join him in establishing a community of free lovers somewhere. Florida was mentioned, and so was Valcour Island in Lake Champlain; and this gave my Grandmother Coleman an opportunity for the only joke so far as I know of her century of life. She bitterly called the place Vulgar Island. "Vulgar" in our vocabulary meant "obscene."

In fact none of our family or friends reacted favorably to the free-love suggestion. It fell flat. The fact that this man, in spite of his reputed wealth and his fine education, was not completely ostracized speaks volumes for the forcefulness of his personality. He still was our friend. He saw in me a little semi-cripple with great facility in his rudimentary studies,

and in my older brothers and sisters a group of benighted children who might have something in them if they only had a chance. So he proceeded to send us reading matter. To my parents he sent *The Banner of Light,* a spiritualist paper; to me came *The Little Corporal,* a boys' paper.

We were under the influence of the Napoleon myth then, and even one of the McGuffey readers had a portrait of the Little Corporal on the cover. The ex-river captain had exhumed from the shelves of his library some few books which came to me after he had departed and found my reputation as a prodigy following him; and for all the youth of the family came a goodly package of a publication which has never been excelled in its field. I mean *Our Young Folks,* a magazine published, I believe, by Osgood & Co.

Clearly this man was a denizen of another world than ours. The glimpse he gave me of this strange realm was immense in its influence. If in accordance with his philosophy his spirit can see its results, I know that in whatever plane he has observed it from he was astonished; and I desire here and now to set down a record of my gratitude for his spiritual eye. He was a light bringer.

And yet the books were rather absurd. One of them was *A System of Double-Entry Bookkeeping With an Infallible Rule for Debtor and Creditor.* It was published in 1832. It lacked lure for me. I remember the Infallible Rule: "Whoever and whatever owes us is debtor; whoever and whatever we owe is creditor," but I never fulfilled what I think must have been his subliminal prophecy that the little chap

with the weak legs might grow up to fill some clerical position. I mastered early the practical—or impractical—side of the Infallible Rule which taught that whoever and whatever I owed was creditor; but the system beyond that was ever a way beset with pitfall and with gin in which I wandered.

But the books which came with it—they were wonderful! One was a *Manual of Botany* which must have come from the press some time in the 'thirties, for it taught the Linnæan system. It devoted a chapter or so to some radicalism advocated by two Frenchmen named De Jussieu and De Candolle, but it seemed to do so under protest. I took no interest in them. Linnæus was so much simpler. I remember how my heart thrilled when I analyzed and classified my first plant, a red prairie lily with one pistil and six stamens. As I pulled it apart and ascertained that its full Linnæan name was *Hexandria monogynia,* my fingers were stained with the purple juice of the quivering anthers. I was all alone a mile or so from any dwelling; but with little *Hexandria* for a companion I was magnificently accompanied. It was a psychological triumph of no small magnitude. For one reason, things of which I had read as existing in lives of men in another world were coming true in mine. I had built a bridge from the life I lived on Grundy Prairie to my ideal and romantic world, and I had done it all alone.

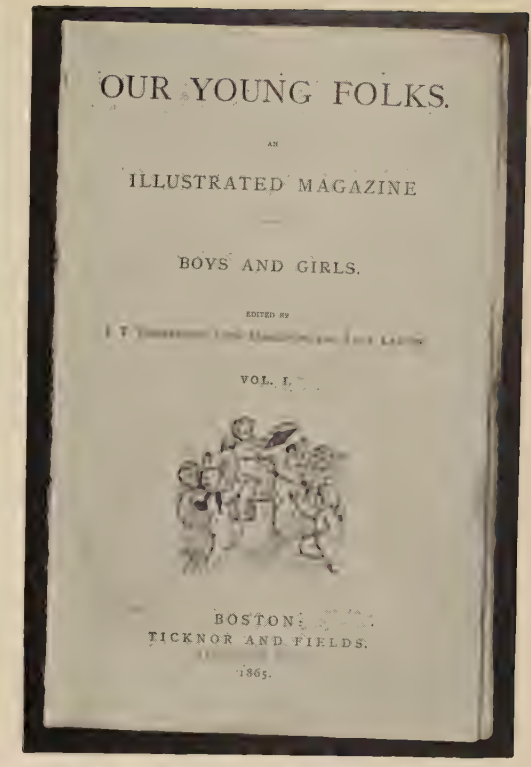
The third of my three treasures was *Comstock's Natural Philosophy,* and the first of many experiments with which I ravaged the home kitchen was that of making a siphon of a crooked onion stalk, and lecturing to my mother on the forces which drew the

water up-hill out of the pail which stood in a chair and drained it over into another which stood on the floor. I thus began at nine or ten that dabbling in science which I have kept up all my life, and which has been useful to me in my work as a writer.

Whoever thinks that the science in my books was any less valuable because it was largely erroneous and out of date is quite mistaken. Education is a means, not an end, especially with the young. Its value is to be measured not by its acquirements, but by its emotional and directive power. The crucial question is always, Where will this road take us? I did not learn much science from these library books, but I did learn to love it passionately. I learned to be insatiably curious as to the nature of this marvelous universe of ours.

I am now making myself a nuisance to several of my scientific friends by letters asking them to investigate the hypothesis propounded by another acquaintance as to the basic nature of the universe, the ultimate law which molds a tear and bids it trickle from its source, and at the same time preserves the world a sphere and guides the planets in their course—a harmonization of Newton, LeSage, Einstein and the other great seers. Well, they may blame the river captain. I can't help it. I am only a behavioristic organism anyhow.

Yet these books were small in their influence in comparison with the bundle of the *Our Young Folks* magazine. I think this great journal of treasures was published in Boston and was finally merged into *St. Nicholas*. It was a nice thick hand-filling magazine, beautifully illustrated, and filled with the best



These Magazines Constituted an Important Part of the Author's Reading.

which that old Boston could find for young minds. Here I met John T. Trowbridge, and read his Darius Green and another long poem which began with:

The apple boughs half hid the house
Where lived the lonely widow;
Behind it stood the chestnut wood,
Before it spread the meadow.

She had no money in her till,
She was too poor to borrow;
With her lame leg she could not beg,
And no one cheered her sorrow.

I have not seen it for more than half a century. It was entitled *The Wonderful Sack* and proved somehow that optimism is a sovereign remedy for widowhood, lack of friends, poverty, and lameness and other physical disabilities. It was too specious for me, but I read it with approval. It was not so good, however, as Darius.

The great Concord and Boston groups were then at the zenith of their powers; and most of these writers contributed to *Our Young Folks.* One may now find in the anthologies poems by the Cary sisters, Lucy Larcom, Celia Thaxter and others which I read in these magazines, which were read to rags by all of us, and of which I reread the rags. Henry Ward Beecher and his great sister were there. The Reverend Elijah Kellogg contributed tales of the New England frontier. When Roosevelt came back from South America with his discovery of the man-eating fish it was old stuff to me. I had read all about the blood-thirsty devils in Mayne Reid's "Afloat in a Forest" in *Our Young Folks.*

These books and magazines constituted an important addition to the McGuffey Readers. In a literary sense they brought them down nearly to the date. They were in every way excellent—not great in volume; for I suppose they would not have constituted, save for the treatises, more than a few days' reading, but they were much. As for *The Little Corporal,* I got twelve numbers; and then came the thirteenth, with the first chapters of a story of a boy who had invented a wonderful machine. It closed with the machine doing its wonders. I felt as if I must renew my subscription. I appealed to my father with my ever-ready tears to give me the money—a whole dollar—with which to do so; and as I think of his expression as he told me we couldn't afford it, I know that the refusal hurt him quite as much as it did me.

So much happened to me by the coming into my life, even in a manner which constituted scarcely a touching of our orbits, of a man who seems to me to have been a cultivated gentleman. It proves again something which has been so often remarked—that we are all the time giving off influence the fatal or beneficent importance of which we can not even surmise.

Abraham Lincoln used to refer to himself as a "mast-fed" lawyer—thus drawing the parallel between his learning and the fattening of animals picking up their nourishment in the woods and fields, a diet of nuts, wild grasses and weeds. I am here telling of the growth of the mast-fed writer. Hitherto I have mentioned the nuts of good literature which I rooted out of the unplowed soil with my mental snout. But the greater bulk of my diet was composed of stuff which was indubitably weeds.

In my mother's family there was a tradition that novels were things which it was sinful or near-sinful to read.

"I say," my grandmother used to observe, "that it is a sin for folks to waste their good time readin' lies."

But the word "novel" gradually came to mean with us only the matter in the pernicious dime-novel—those blood-and-thunder tales which could be bought for ten cents. Of these I read very few for two reasons. First, the boys in my circle were not addicted to such mild devilment as reading forbidden stuff, or anything else; and second, I never had the dime.

There were at least two masterpieces of fiction which our frontier ancestors held in high regard. These were Miss Porter's *Scottish Chiefs* and another work which I never saw—*The Children of the Abbey.* These were not classed as novels. I have no idea what they were thought to be unless it was veritable history. When you find William W., in the name of the man born in the first half of the nineteenth century, you may be sure that it was William Wallace; and Helen M. was Helen Mar. Happy Jane Porter and blest Scottish Chiefs! She came no nearer to writing veritable history than I have done in *Vandemark's Folly, The Hawkeye* and *The Invisible Woman;* but I am writing for a sophisticated age which will never, I fear, give to me the touching faith my parents and grandparents bestowed on Jane Porter. My Aunt Helen was named for the Lady Helen Mar. I did read at least one of the Porter novels, and that with the approbation of every one.

We had read in the family circle, too, several of

the novels of Mary J. Holmes; and these were all that came in cloth until I met Dickens years afterward, when I was pretty well grown up. My supply of weeds came through the illustrated story papers, the *New York Ledger,* the *New York Weekly,* and the *Saturday Night,* published in Philadelphia. I don't believe we ever subscribed for any of them. Families in the neighborhood always preserved their files and lent them to us. All of them carried notices to the effect that every number was electrotyped and that back numbers could be obtained. Folks were supposed to take their light fiction seriously—and did.

Grandma used to groan lugubriously when these papers were read; but she listened avidly just the same, and would be so carried away by the insidious temptation as to read them herself, her lips moving as she whispered the words. I maliciously suggested to her at times that these stories were novels and she shouldn't read them.

"Wal, Herbie," she would protest, "I ain't really readin' it. I jes' want to see how the fool thing comes out."

Thus did the old landmarks of Puritanism sink beneath the rising tide of worldliness. It was portentous. My father and mother soon ceased to struggle with the letting out of the great waters. They even allowed us to go to dances. They even winked at our playing of dominoes! Ah, that was an Arcadian age!

These three illustrated story papers had an immense influence on the America of that day. They lived vigorous lives under the ban of the older morality and religion. The one which drew most of the Puritanic lightnings was the *Ledger,* published by Robert

Bonner. It was much the best of the three. Its editorial page was excellent. Every week there was an article by Doctor John Hall, a celebrated divine, and the author also of my friend Bolton Hall. Either in the *Ledger* or the *Weekly* there was also a short moral deliverance by Mary Kyle Dallas. In one of them, too, there was nearly always a poem by John G. Saxe. Some good poetry—much mere verse—was used as fillers just as in the magazines now. All these papers were obtrusively moral in their tone. They had to be. If the ministers were to be believed, they were bad enough when they were good. All were copiously illustrated. The background against which the frills of editorials and poetry were hung was the sensational continued story.

I have reckoned the avoirdupois weight of these papers which I read at a ton, but this may be an overestimate. I read them by the bale. In the stories of Professor William Henry Peck—I am reporting all this from memory—I was plunged into the atmosphere of knighthood, piracy and the wars of the Middle Ages; and the same was true of others of these romancers. Bertha M. Clay ushered me into the society of kings, princes and nobles and their dames and maidens, and stuffed me with love. Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth did much the same, but with her we were of the aristocracy of old Virginia—and in love. Ned Buntline—E. Z. C. Judson—took us to sea, and afterward out on the plains and among the bears, buffalo and Indians, with Buffalo Bill and Kit Carson et al.

I became a critic. The first numbers of one of the Indian tales told of a regenade white man named "Simon Girtz." I knew that the printer had read a

"y" as "z," and was proud when a foot-note came along saying, "The real name of this miscreant was Girty." I felt superior to that printer—who had not read as much frontier history as I had. I had my favorite authors chosen from the extended lists of these three journals, all of whom, so far as I can remember, are now forgotten.

I was saturated with the conceptions and ideals and scenes of this world of hectic, strained and meretricious fancy. But the variety of it was enormous. It took me into the gilded palaces of cities on both continents and in all ages. It dragged me into robbers' dens, dark dungeons, the lurking places and fighting grounds and huts of savages in all the wildernesses and islands of the world. It carried me with heroes of humble birth to all sorts of glories, to success on the tented field or the tinted canvas, from agriculture to authorship, from trials to thrones.

It gave me a false history; but was it falser than that of the serious books? I wonder. It made me familiar with the most select circles in most of the societies of the ages and nations—as familiar, anyhow, as were the men and women who wrote the stuff—and this did me much good. I was a naturalized citizen, or at least a denizen, of everywhere—until my status was challenged; and there was no one on the farm to challenge it. I never said a word to any one about it, never tried to vote, kept my status in this plexus of worlds quite to myself, and moved unobtrusively among all my fellow-nobles, kings, freebooters, bandits and savage chiefs.

This literature gave me a vocabulary and a command of language. Living in a society and on a plane

where people talked dialect even when they knew better, because to "talk proper" was a badge of "feeling stylish," it was an excellent thing for me to converse habitually day after day and night after night with the young people of elegant conversation in Bertha M. Clay or Mrs. Southworth, or the folk of archaic diction of Professor William Henry Peck. I was given a more complex intellectual life. As I hauled manure or picked bugs from the potatoes, I was—false to Martha Crippen—in my subliminal consciousness wooing some fair maid in her father's sunken garden or exhorting my followers to follow me to victory or death. As I picked the stubs of the burned prairie from my bare feet, I stanched the wounds of Indian arrows or repelled boarders from the sinking frigate.

I treaded forests, floated down unknown rivers, greeted the Bedouin horseman of the desert with the gallant query as to whether it was to be peace or war, climbed mountains capped with snow, carried entrenchments, discovered gold, made fortunes, slew bears, tigers, lions, Indians and other lethal fauna, and in those sublime pearly mountains of towering thunderhead of the prairie skies which surpass all real mountains in magnificence as Everest surpasses a mole-hill, I made my own fairy-land and peopled it with eagles, heroes and fair ones who lived among the lightnings in palaces of nacre.

The searing wind of the Iowa blizzard was an accident to exploration in arctic wilds. The greening hillsides of prairie grass shot with the blue of the upland violets became the Field of the Cloth of Gold. Upon us all rested the burdens of poverty, exhausting labor

and frequent illness; and all about us the life seemed very narrow, sordid, circumscribed, repressive. Ours was a prosy and uninteresting world. But these piles of sensational stories made me a prince, paladin or page in a fascinating universe of other worlds, from the discussion of which with any one I was inhibited by my frontier, rural and Dutch reticences.

Was all this feverish stimulus bad for me? I am sure that it was not. I think it was an excellent thing for me. No doubt it would have been better if my reading had been done under cultured guidance, with intellectual companionship, in some good library; but the worst of reading is better than none at all, provided only that it is interesting. And I was fortunately not subject to temptation by such mental garbage as most people use for the killing of their intellectual activities now. I had no sporting news, no sensational biographies of people who have done nothing, no stock exchange and market news, no fashion pages, no serried columns of alleged news under screaming head-lines to be contradicted to-morrow, no comic strips, no congressional proceedings, and, thank God, no cross-word puzzles! And it must not be forgotten that most of my time was passed in solitude—in mental solitude, nearly all of it.

I gained some fame among my superiors who lived in town. Once when I was not yet ten years old, I went with my father to Steamboat Rock, as I was permitted to do about once a year. This town was a village of perhaps one hundred and fifty inhabitants. Even the journey was a great adventure, for it took me down a terrifying hill—terrifying to a child brought up on the gently undulating prairie; it prom-

ised the thrilling sight of a railroad and perhaps a train; it gave me a view of the river hills with their forested slopes; and it assured me the fearful thrill of associating with strangers, in so far at least as to look at them as they did their trading in the stores, or to walk along the board sidewalks with them. My old companion in school castigation lived there—Charley Robinson. He took me and several town boys with him down to the high rocks which gave the village its name.

I did not hit it off with these blasé youths at all. I was afraid of them. They did not like me. I was very unhappy under their unveiled contempt. Charley resented the whole situation, but he was in honor bound to defend his guest.

"You needn't be so mean to Herb," said he to all and sundry. "You can't none of you tell as good stories as he can."

"Aw, stories!" ejaculated the meanest one. "What's stories? Let him tell one if he's so smart!"

Before I knew it, on a strip of blue-grass along the narrow flood plain of the river, we were all seated on the sod, with every eye on me. I knew my voice trembled as I began a story which I had told Charley. It was a tale of a boy who killed a panther. I had cribbed it from the *New York Weekly;* but I did not leave its beauty unadorned. I expanded it into an Indian fight from quite another source. Soon the fervor of successful plagiarism passed over into that of creation; and when I finished my test, I dropped my voice and shrank back in panic at having dared to take the center of the stage among a group of town boys—and then I tasted victory.

"Aw," grudgingly admitted the meanest boy, "that ain't a bad story. Tell another."

But we went in swimming instead—in a real river! This gave me the pride of a new and a worldly experience like those of which I had read. I could only paddle, to be sure; and I should gladly have exchanged my skill as a raconteur for the boy-of-the-world ease of manners, the proficiency in slang, the skill in swimming and the style of the initiate of the other boys. Yet they now vouchsafed to me a sort of equality. I had no conceit of real equality, to say nothing of my superiority. Yet for the first time the country boy had won the victory in town. I went home with a little swelling of pride in my heart. I had used my sensational literature as my weapon. It meant something to me.

One may draw a moral from a comparison of those old popular literary papers with the weeklies and monthlies which have taken their places to-day. I suppose that the *Ledger*, the *Saturday Night* and the *Weekly* had a circulation equal, as compared with the population, to the great popular publications of to-day. Like the latter, they were published for the great mass of the reading public. They had some of the characteristics of our present-day popular favorites—much fiction, some verse, a serious editorial page; but they had very little of the really important matter which now goes to millions through our basically popular journals. It will be remembered, too, that the present state of our popular literature has been reached through a competition between the trifling and the more or less serious writings. Fifteen years or so ago I was asked by the owner and publisher of

some of our most popular magazines to write a series of articles on so serious a subject as financial crises.

"I lose readers," said he, "whenever I publish anything but trash; but I want such articles as these I am asking you about to show to advertisers. They are for the advertiser, and not for the readers. All the readers want is trash."

This was always the attitude of this great figure in the magazine world. Now as to the moral: The old sensational literary papers which I read have disappeared. And even as to the group of magazines controlled by the man who thought he lost readers whenever he deviated from trash, they have lost out in the competition with those edited by men who had faith in the demands of the people for solid reading matter mingled with that which is light in tone. I can draw only one inference—the intelligence of the American public has reached a higher plane since I was a boy.

The neighbors gradually came to know that whenever they had a book that cluttered the place up they could get rid of it by sending or giving it to Herbie Quick, no matter what its character. Some one brought me a copy of *Harper's Monthly* which had in it an article on *Early American Art,* and I lay awake of nights after reading of John Singleton Copley, Rembrandt Peale, Samuel Finley Breese Morse, Washington Allston and other early painters, and looking at woodcuts of their paintings. I was exalted. I was going to be a painter. Then some one lent me a copy of Headley's *Lives of the Presidents,* which had to be returned in so short a time that I needs must sit up of nights to read it. Here I learned that all our

presidents have not only been geniuses of the first order in statecraft but perfect in character!

I had to know several presidents in order to get rid of this conventional prostitution of the noble sentiment of patriotism. It changed me then from an embryo painter to a future president. Fillmore Sproule, a man of forty, came three miles or more to bring me a description of Watkins Glen by that pioneer in entertaining descriptive literature for magazines, David H. Strother, who wrote good stuff and illustrated it under the name of Porte Crayon. Fillmore had lived at Watkins before coming to Iowa, and wanted to have a companion in the enjoyment of this article. I could not have been more than twelve years old.

William Vincent Allen was then a lawyer at Ackley, Iowa. He had some legal business in the court of a justice of the peace out in the country, and left behind him a book called *Getting on in the World,* by William Mathews, a college professor in Chicago. The wife of the justice was my aunt, and, as a matter of course, brought the book to me. It was surcharged with the old self-help philosophy, filled with quotations, and consciously intended to spur the ambitions of young men. But Mathews was a professor of modern literature, and the success held up to the young men of his clientele was literary or professional success. I am sure that this book had a powerful directive effect upon me, for I kept it and read and reread it. It did not aid me in being content in that walk of life for which Providence had called me.

After I had grown up and entered the profession of the law via the back door, I lived in Sioux City,

and was a member of the Democratic State Committee of Iowa. William V. Allen had removed to Nebraska, become a Republican, changed over to populism; and as we had reached the period of fusion, he used to come to Sioux City as a campaign speaker, and thus I met him in my official capacity. He then held the long-distance speaking record as an obstructionist orator in our great national chamber of obstruction. He was a man of good ability. One day I asked him if he had ever possessed Mathews' *Getting on in the World,* and if so what became of it.

"Yes," said he, "I had it; and Klaas Primus, a young German pettifogger in Grundy County, Iowa, stole it from me."

"You must acquit Klaas," said I. "You left it at S. G. Crane's, and Mrs. Crane gave it to me, and if you ever get it you will have to replevy it. It was for years the Bible of a barefooted boy out on the prairie, and he thinks a great deal of it."

"Keep it with my blessings," said he. "No book ever printed contained a higher percentage of bosh."

'Tis thus we lose our illusions.

Charley Bohn, a Pennsylvania Dutchman—we never called him German—had removed from Ohio to Iowa and brought with him an old history of Ohio by counties. It was printed with the stupid matter in nice large type, and the stories of Indian wars, adventures and the like in small. Charley remembered that my mother had once lived in Conneaut and brought it to us thinking that she might be interested in it. I read it and reread it. I learned of Lew Wetzel, Adam and Andrew Poe, Simon Girty, Tecumseh, Johnny Appleseed, Cornstalk and all the

interesting people of the pioneer history of Ohio. There was a long account of Wayne's victory over Indians, and of St. Clair's previous defeat, the latter carrying a long poem in the style of *Chevy Chase,* one stanza of which closed the description of the wounding of an American officer with these terrific lines:

> He leaned against a tree
> And cried, "Ye hounds of hell!
> Revenged I will be!"

One never knows, in my sort of life at least, what use he may find for a bit of knowledge long kept in mental cold storage. After I was getting well along toward the status of an elderly man, two brothers in Cleveland asked me to come there and look over a problem which they had to solve. They were O. P. and M. J. Van Sweringen, now known of all. They had before the city government a contest on a franchise ordinance which provided for the vacation of some streets that they might build their great freight warehouse and sorting yards. After I had spent three days in looking it over and studying both the proposition itself and the character of their opposition, Mr. O. P. Sweringen asked me if I believed that as a public matter they ought to have the franchise. I replied that if I lived in Cleveland I should support it.

"Well," said he, "if you can conscientiously do so, I should be glad to have you take charge of our publicity."

"I'll do it," said I, "if the publicity is published as propaganda and is not put before the people as disinterested opinion."

"Agreed," said he. "We'll have every item of it published as advertising matter."

I really believe that if all corporation propaganda were prepared and published with as much care for the principles of fairness to the public as was true in this case, both the corporations and the people would be much better off. He did not ask me to write until I was convinced that they had the right of it, and he was willing to have everybody know that the matter was a part of a paid-for campaign.

I sat down to think over my mode of attack. As I had been prowling about the city, looking the ground over, the name of Kingsbury Run had been often mentioned. This stream flows down into Lake Erie through a deep ravine and divides the city. The first of the Van Sweringen mergers had been the consolidation of their street-railway system which served the great surburban development of Shaker Heights with the paper Cleveland and Youngstown Railway; and the C. & Y. was routed down Kingsbury Run to the Van Sweringen terminus in the heart of Cleveland.

Along this route were the new freight yards, with the freight depot on a level with the business section. All railways using it would save the expensive hill climbing which burdened all of them except the Pennsylvania. It was a great project, though small compared with the gigantic ones which these transportation genuises have since developed. They had not at that time acquired the Nickel Plate. They were just prominent real-estate men with a talent for town planning, who were developing a suburban rapid-transit system up and down the Kingsbury Run

ravine, with a freight terminal on the side. And where had the name of Kingsbury attached itself to my mind, in connection with Ohio?

Then the whole thing came to me. Judge Kingsbury was one of the pioneer heroes of Ohio of whom I had read out on Grundy Prairie in the old History of Ohio which Charley Bohn had given us. He had settled somewhere—I had forgotten where—and brought with him his young wife. The husband had gone back East for provisions and had left his wife in their log cabin. An early winter had prevented his return and she was left alone.

During the long cold winter she waited, wondering if he could reach her in her agony; for she was expecting a baby, which finally came to her as she lay there alone. She cared for it and for herself. She kept the fire going in the fireplace. She prepared her own food. Finally, however, the food supply dwindled and she faced starvation; but she did not give up. She had noticed that a wild turkey came every morning and scratched in the leaves where the earth was bare of snow under a great tree. Here was food if she could shoot that turkey. She had a rifle, but only one tiny charge of powder. The life of her babe, of which she thought much more than of her own, depended upon her skill in stalking that bird and of her use of that little, little portion of black powder.

So she cleaned the rifle barrel carefully—think of the maternal provision of that—so that none of her treasure would be lost by sticking to the gun barrel, poured it carefully in, rammed down a bullet which she had painstakingly trimmed so that it would go straight to the mark, meticulously primed the gun to

"Folks were Supposed to Take Their Light Fiction Seriously—and Did."

prevent a misfire, hid herself before dawn, waited; and when the turkey came, shot it and used it to sustain life until Judge Kingsbury came, hoping against all probability to find her alive.

What a tremendous story that is of pioneer hardship and resourcefulness! I wondered now if this important Kingsbury Run might not have been named for its hero and heroine. I went out to the library of the Western Reserve University, found the book and the story, learned that the log cabin of the Kingsburys had stood in the forest near the right of way of the Cleveland & Youngstown Railway; and I knew that Charley Bohn's old book had placed in the mind of the little boy of those old Iowa days the very thing he needed to make his advertising matter attractive to the people of the great city which Judge Kingsbury had helped to found. I wrote my appeals under the title *The Story of Kingsbury Run,* perfectly certain that they would be read, turned them in at the Van Sweringen offices, had them approved, and went back to my regular work, thus finishing the only advertising copy I ever have done. The Van Sweringens won the election, and I was much gratified—until I learned that little or none of my story had been published.

I made a little effort to find out why. Mr. O. P. Van Sweringen assured me that the work I had done was very valuable to him. He had wanted something like that for a long time. It was a pithy, an interesting, and at the same time an accurate epitome of their business affairs, already becoming very extensive. It was well worth all it had cost—but not a word as to why they had not published it. I finally found out,

however; or satisfied myself at least. The Van Sweringens seem to be controlled by that psychic complex which governs the violet 'neath a mossy stone. They hate to be discussed or mentioned, and especially they hate to be praised. Now I had been forced to dwell to some extent on these very remarkable business men and their achievements, which were then already extraordinary. When it came to paying for space in the papers for praise for themselves, their gorge rose, they revolted, the advertising campaign was largely killed, and the copy was devoted to other and more private uses. In my process of sugaring off the sap I drew from Charley Bohn's History of Ohio, I had been balked by a rather phenomenal modesty. The whole affair shows, however, the ineradicable impressions made on the mind of a boy full of curiosity by the few and obscure books he was able to read, which is my present point.

There was one other book which I must not fail to mention among the formative influences of my childhood. It was a little green-covered volume entitled *Alice Learmont, or a Mother's Love,* and was one of those old-fashioned fairy tales of Scotland shot through and through with the blood feuds of the Scottish border, the terror and glamour of fairy-land, including such things as the water kelpie, the fate of the changeling and the peasant life, in which the love of a mother redeemed from the bonds of Faerie, a daughter taken from the birth bed by the Queen of Fairy-land. It was full of thrills, chills and fearsomeness. It was given to my sister Stella as a prize by one of our teachers. On the inside of the cover is the date, 1870. So I was nine years old when this tale came to me; for it so happened that I was the only one

of the household who could make anything of the braid Scots dialect, which I think rather odd.

It opens with the sentence, "I wonder at ye, Mistress Thomas Learmont. It's no canny to do sic a thing." On the evening of the day of the birth of Alice Learmont, a descendant of Thomas the Rhymer of Ereildoun—"him that was wonned into—into the land ye ken o'—for seven long years, and came back; and was sent for by the gude folk, and never seen mair," the prospective mother whispered "the gloaming's unco' dark." Daft Simmie, the neighborhood half-wit, who naturally knew all the fairy mysteries, sang under the window:

"There were twa lads fechtin' on Eildon Hill,
With a hey and a ho and a hoodie craw;
The tane the tither's bluid did spill;
'Ho-ho,' says the hoodie craw."

To this he added the three stanzas of *Bonnie George Campbell,* in a form very different from that adopted by Mr. Burton Stevenson in his great anthology. Now this dialect was not very difficult for me. I seemed to know at the first reading that "coom ben" means "come in"; and if some Scots words like "speer" puzzled me for a while, such perplexity did not prevent my translation to fairy-land.

Our parents did not think this book a very good one for us; but after I had inducted the other children into its mysteries, it became a dissipation for all of us from which we could not be weaned. It formed for me the best possible introduction to Burns and the Scottish writers, when their time came. I knew the language. I had learned one hundred and fifty pages by heart in which it had thrilled and terrified me.

Moreover, out there in the prosaic atmosphere of Iowa, I had lived in fairy-land for years whenever I desired to do so. I had become a sort of Thomas the Rhymer myself, and went whenever the gude folk sent for me. It was one of the formative books of my life. I do not know by whom it was written. Its author's name does not appear in our copy. I only know it was dedicated to "My Godchild Alice, with Tender Wishes and Future Hopes." I hope it did Alice as much good as it did me.

I have dwelt too long perhaps on the intellectual provender of a mast-fed man of letters. All this literature—good, bad and indifferent; but the great bulk of it that is generally called very bad—came to me by a series of accidents, and I read with no guidance or control whatever. I believe that most of the good which it brought to me arose from the fact that it was hard to obtain. I was not cloyed by too much reading as are so many boys and girls to-day. Everything was grist that came to my mill, and there was such a scarcity that I ground it over and over again.

The most important element in personality is attitude. It doesn't make so much difference where one is or how fast he is moving, as which way he is faced. I received my intellectual regimen of nourishment, beverage and roughage in such small amounts and at such rare intervals that most of it was absolutely delicious and all of it palatable; and this gave me a powerful tropism toward the world of letters. All the education I was vouchsafed dealt with the printed page. The era of studies of actual things had not arrived in our schools; in fact it is only now beginning to be seen as the important thing in education.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE CHRONICLE OF WHEAT

Most of our Iowa pioneers were farmers, though the town dwellers, being more articulate, have arrogated to themselves most of the written records. They were farmers who brought with them the desire merely to make homes and livings therefrom. Some of the covered-wagon people were possessed of the greed of land speculation, but most of them simply desired homes of their own; that and the satisfaction of the racial urge to follow the setting sun. They found the prairie lacking in the capacity to yield the satisfaction of as many of their wants as did the forest.

There was no game to furnish skins for clothing. They had left the hemp and flax behind them. There were no maples for sugar, no bee trees for honey, little wild fruit for food. So for a while their regimen was far less adequate than that to which they were accustomed. There was no forest to give them logs for houses, and little timber fit for lumber. Soon they had fuel to buy. There were no salt licks for salt. In a thousand ways they were forced to resort to the production of a surplus to sell for money with which to buy supplies. This impelled them into wheat growing; and Illinois and Iowa began to glut the markets with it, and with quantities of oats, barley

and such other cereals as could be sold. As soon as I was able to work, I became a bond servant to wheat.

With the first honk of the wild goose in spring, our minds turned to the cleaning of seed wheat; and I was called upon to turn the crank of the fanning mill which took out of it the chaff, oats and light kernels. At first all grains were sowed by hand. I remember seeing my father walking across the fields of black soil, a two-bushel bag held open with his left hand and slung across his shoulder, while, as he stepped, his right swayed with perfect rhythm out to the end of his graceful gesture, back with a skilful twist of the wrist as the grain was scattered evenly, and with the same movement, went into the bag again for another handful. But the genius of inventors gave us all the time more and better tools. Soon came the seeder like a heavy two-wheeled carriage drawn by horses, which sowed the grain, covering the wheat with its shovels. Then came the grain drill.

In the work of seeding my job was to follow the sower with a team dragging the square, or forty-tooth harrow. How I dreaded the time of walking after that drag, back and forth across the field of soft tilth until it seemed as if my feet and ankles, stiffened by poliomyelitis, would break under me. When I began this I was so small and such an inexperienced driver that sometimes at the ends of the field I turned my team too short, the outer section of the harrow whirled up into the air and I was in danger of an upset, which might throw the sharp steel teeth in such a way as to threaten the stabbing of the horses, or myself perhaps, as it jerked about. But the farmer boy shoulders responsibility. He must take care of

himself. He has a team and valuable tools in his charge. He is supposed to be as wise as a serpent, as harmless as a dove and as industrious as a beaver. That is why there is so much education for boys in rural life.

At first all we had to do was to tickle the new-broken prairie with a harrow and a few other things—a laborious tickle for us, of course—and it laughed with a harvest. Never was there a scene of such redundance as was exhibited by those virgin prairies at the flush of the wheat yield. In the beginning the landscape was a glorious undulating sea of waving prairie grass, on which floated here and there a quadrangular raft of tillage. The roads were wagon tracks, running diagonally from the villages to the farms, and in main roads from town to town; but these were gradually crowded by tillage from their antigodlin courses to their present places on the section lines, all running north and south or east and west.

Each farm became in its first season of new breaking a sea of tumble-weeds, the seeds of which must have been always normally scattered over the prairie, to germinate and grow into huge globes of green when their vegetable competitors were destroyed by the plow, to die in autumn, and then to roll over the plain before the wind, looking like ghosts in the twilight, or like scudding prairie wolves by day, and to drift in huge piles into our corn fields or groves. The German immigrants called them wolves. They were then a peculiar feature of the Iowa landscape. The Dakotas and Montana have their own type of tumble-weed in the pestiferous Russian thistle. Ours were really almost harmless.

After the encroaching area of cultivation assumed importance, industry touched the landscape with its magic wand and it became another sort of ocean—a sea of wheat. All our seeding was done in the spring. It was not until the Russian immigrants had brought along with the Russian thistle a more hardy type of winter wheat to the states west of us that fall seeding was known. Our spring fever was a fever of seeding. Teams, seeders and harrows moved across the black fields from early morn to dusk, the golden grain went into the soil for a fortnight or so, and then we waited for the sprouting.

Sometimes the sky was almost darkened by great flocks of what we called wheat birds, which whirled in evolutions of sport from field to field, and settling down, fattened on such grains as had not been covered. Since early days those great flocks of wheat birds have ceased to appear. They seem to have been of some species which, while there was still plenty of prairie grass in which to nest and a new supply of grain on which to feed, multiplied to many times their former numbers, but have since dwindled to a status which renders them again inconspicuous. I believe they were the prairie horned lark, that sweet-singing little darling which makes the Iowa twilight so melodious with his slow and gentle solo in spring.

The progress of the wheat had a stressful enchantment for us. First it showed a tinge of almost invisible green on the brows of hills after a rain; then its stiff spires stood sparkling in the morning sun, like the points of bright green nails driven up from below; then its broad blades of dark green began rippling like watered silk in the prairie breeze; and

finally there it stood breast high, waving in the wind in lakes of billows. Its progress meant weal to us and its damage woe. It grew so rank sometimes that we trembled at every shower for fear it would lodge down into a slimy recumbence on the ground. When the grasshopper plague appeared west of us, we searched the air with our eyes and scanned the roadsides for locusts. We talked wheat, we swam in a medium of wheat.

Then came the harvest. My first memory of wheat is of my father cutting it with an old Seymour & Morgan hand-rake reaper. He sat in the seat and drove, while my brother-in-law stood or sat—I forget which—and raked off the sheaves into gavels to be bound. I could not then have been more than four years old. The hand-rake machine was not much of an improvement over the cradle, which was the first step forward from the sickle wielded by the harvesters after whom Ruth gleaned in the fields of Boaz.

Not for long were we left with no better harvesting machine than the hand-rake reaper. The development of the prairies and the genius of the inventors reacted upon each other. We soon had our choice among three better types. There was the McCormick reaper, with its reel to throw the standing grain on the platform back of the vibrating sickle, and its huge rake which rose at regular intervals like a great red beckoning hand, swept through the air, turned with an ingenious and effective twist and swept the sheaf into a gavel which lay beside its track—a most impressive and picturesque tool. But the Aultman-Taylor type was equally striking. All had their reels and platforms and reciprocating sickles, working in guards

like fingers, which held the standing straws while the sickles cut them; but the Aultman-Taylor had a whole inflorescence of rakes which blossomed from a central root crown of machinery low down at the driver's left. These rakes, however, fooled their time away, as it seemed to me, by just giving the standing grain a backward shove against the sickle—all but one. This one rake, whenever it came around, mysteriously followed a course of its own, dropped down into some slot or channel, and raked off the sheaves as did the beckoning hand of the McCormick. It was a marvel to me—this rakish eccentricity of one of the whirling members. The third type of reaper was the Buckeye dropper, which carried the cut grain along on a row of slats, and the gavel was dropped to be taken up by the binders.

We divided into factions in support of our favorite machines. On our farm we were partisans of the dropper; but after a while we found that we were wrong. The Germans taught us. They deviated from the American plan of always having binders enough to take up what the machine could cut as fast as it slashed it down. They used their boys and girls and women in the harvest field. We hired men who would now be called hobos, but who were really good industrious young fellows out to make money when wages were high. They often followed the harvests from Texas to Manitoba.

Our harvesters each bound his station, which consisted of every man binding his share of the sheaves raked off or dropped, while the machine was going around the field. When the large-scale production of wheat began, the farmer was required to have six

men to follow the machine. Then either economic pressure or increasing skill cut down the number to five, and in many fields to four. In the latter case the binder had to bind a third of the way around the field while the machine made the circuit. If he didn't he was caught. To be caught by the machine was a sort of disgrace and the culprit was mercilessly chaffed. The *esprit de corps* was high, especially when, as was usually the case, a jug of whisky or of grain alcohol and water sweetened with brown sugar was occasionally brought out by the water carrier.

I began my harvesting as a water carrier; and I remember that the first time I took out the whisky—it was in a bottle—I stopped in the grove, just for devilment, and took a sip of it. I wanted to know how it tasted. I handed the bottle to Henry, a dashing young wanderer who had been hired for that morning.

"I seen you stop there behind the trees and take a drink," said Henry, who knew boy nature. "Don't think you can fool your Uncle Hank, son!"

I stammered and blushed. I wondered how he knew!

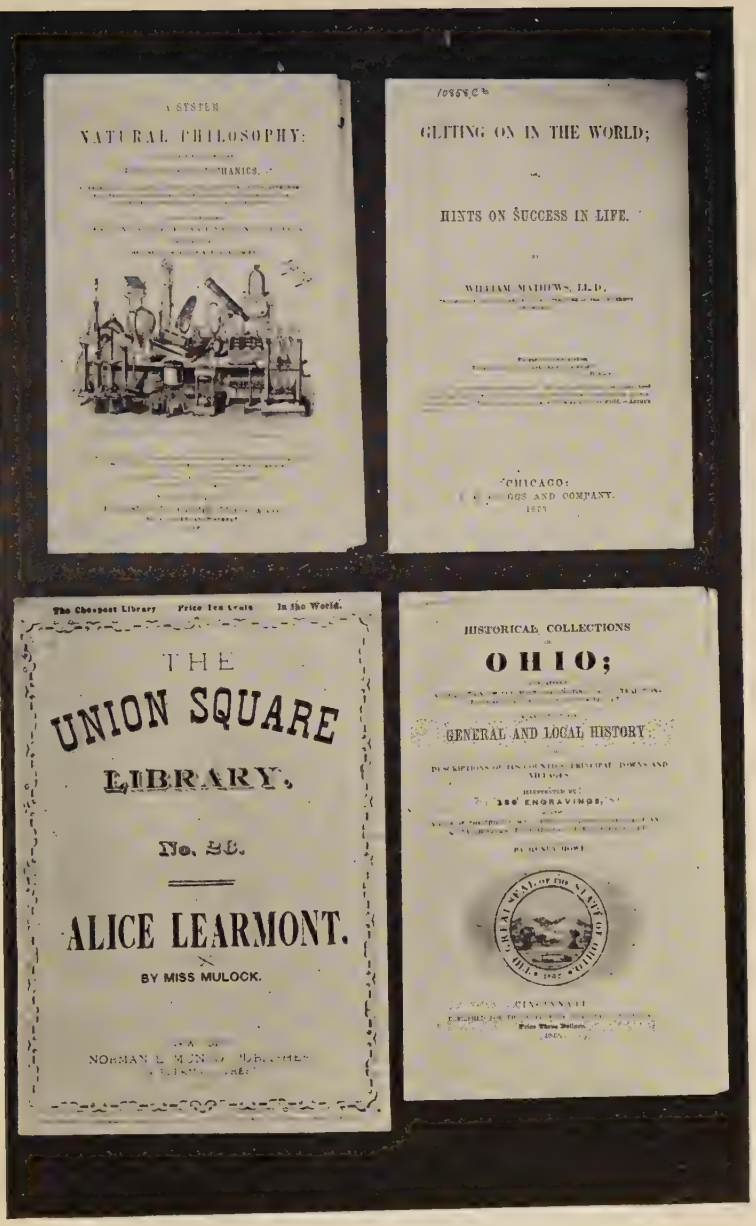
Whoever thinks it anything less than a man's job to bind a third of the round, while the team makes a whole one, ought to try it. The sun beat down with all the fierceness of a Sahara noon. The yellow straw seemed to condense the rays like a lens. The green katydids sailed off out of the path of the hasting feet. The meadow lark sang from the tops of tall gum weeds. The binder was inordinately proud of his skill sometimes. He pulled from the sheaf, as he threw it away, enough straw wherewith to make a band for the next, and as he walked he twisted it

into form, the heads in the middle, the butts spread, his thumb on the crook back of the heads. As he approached the gavel his feet shoved the grain up into a sheaf, he dexterously squared it up with a single little toss, threw the band about it as he lifted it, laid it on the ground, cinched it up and tucked the straw into a knot; and then he threw it away, and at the same time snatched out the straw for the next band, gathered up such loose straw as might have been left so as to make a clean job of it, and was on to the next sheaf. Usually, however, he did the business of each sheaf during a pause in his progress. Often he had to trot from gavel to gavel. At the end of his station, which was where the man ahead of him had begun, his shirt was dripping with sweat as he looked back for the oncoming reaping machine, and if there was time, he sat or lay down with his head on a sheaf for a rest.

Some farmers always believed that this system of binding stations had so much of emulation in it that it was economical. But the Germans abandoned it, cut whole fields of gavels to be bound up, and by using their women and children got their harvests in with less expense than was possible by the Yankee way.

Sometimes there would be a rattlesnake in a sheaf. One of our neighbors, a German settler fresh from the old country, took his wife into the harvest field to help with the binding. She took her baby along and parked it under a shock in the shade. One day the man came to the house of a neighbor just as they were sitting down to dinner. They invited him to join them and he accepted. After eating heartily, he confided to them that his wife was sick.

"She vas vorkin' in te fielt," said he, "an' a



Such Books Fell into the Author's Hands.

snake stung her in de handt. Pretty soon she couldn't vork no more, ant so she vent to de house to git dinner; but ven I vent to dinner she didn't haf any got. I was hungry, too."

The German was astounded to see that family leap like a blade from the scabbard, put a boy on a horse to gallop posthaste for a doctor, while the wife hurried to the German's house to apply snake-bite remedies. But the poor woman died that night.

To us the attitude of our new neighbor was one justifying a sort of shocked contempt on our part. There had been in our ancestry a long line of pioneers familiar with rattlesnakes, and a thousand other less horrible things related to the primitive. A man who could stick to his work after his wife had been snake-bit, send her to the house to get dinner after the virus in her veins had begun its deadly work, and then calmly sit down and eat a meal before mentioning it to a neighbor, stamped the entire class of immigrants in our rather narrow minds as being of a low order of intelligence. We could not make the proper allowances for the fact that he was densely ignorant of our conditions, including our snakes, had been an ignorant laborer in Germany, and, of course, could not react in the instant alarm of one of us to the peril which to him was a thing theretofore unheard of.

It is a story of some significance as to this great matter of assimilation of immigrants. These Germans were, after all, our sort of people. They belonged to our branch of the white race. They were basically quite as intelligent as we. They were quite as good people as we were. They responded with wonderful quickness to the tests of fitness for Ameri-

can citizenship. Now if even with them there were so many mutual adjustments in citizenship, what argument can be offered against the strict regulation and the exclusion in large measure of the still more alien immigrants from Asia and from Eastern and Southern Europe, with whom we have so much less in common than with the Germans? Common citizenship calls for cooperation and mutual understanding. Our own shortcomings, if they prevent the approaches of citizen to citizen, are as necessary to be taken into account as those of the immigrants.

It is possible to imagine a people who ought to be excluded as immigrants precisely to the extent to which they might be superior to ourselves, if that superiority set them off from us. It is not a question of superiority at all, but one of fitness for fellowship in the great work of self-government.

We were not confined to the type of reaper I have described, in which the grain was cut and thrown on the ground, and then picked up and bound with straw bands. We had a great and revolutionary machine called the header, which beheaded the grain and discharged their heads and the minimum of straw into wagons equipped with header boxes, in which the grain was taken to stacks to await the coming of the thrashing machine. This was a wonderful machine. It was not drawn, apparently, but pushed ahead of a team of several horses.

Though it made harvesting a short task, with little of the strenuous labor of the old method, it was never a success in Iowa. It is still in use in some of the great wheat fields of the dryer West. The stacks of short straw and heads would not shed the rain, and

a wet season brought ruin to the man who used the header. We tried it once. Our neighbor Tom Brown, afterward, for a generation almost, sheriff of Grundy County, brought the header into our lives and cut our grain with it. Our crop was damaged in the stack. We were already suffering from the inevitable evils of the one-crop system of agriculture, one of which was that certain weeds flourished in the wheat. At this time the worst of these was the rosinweed. In heading, there was no chance for the green weeds to dry out before stacking. The rain dampened the stacks, and the rosinweeds and wheat mildew molded and fermented together. At thrashing time the wheat came out of the spout of the machine in a damp and sluggish stream, which made our spirits equally damp. When made into flour, it tasted of rosin. I was reminded of the sick wheat which I had read of in my History of Ohio, which caused nausea and other symptoms of poisoning in those who ate the bread made from it. Our rosinweed wheat did not poison us, maybe because we couldn't eat enough of it. My parents, what with low prices, damaged grain and one thing and another, were heartsick. The great machine which had promised to free me from the back-breaking work of binding grain on the ground was declared a failure.

There was a harvesting machine, still in use in some regions, I believe, which cut off the heads and thrashed them as it ran. The straw was discharged in a windrow beside the machine, and the wheat dropped into a box, which needed but to be emptied occasionally, and the harvesting was done. Illinois was the great center of invention in harvesting machinery,

and this combined reaper and thrasher was given most of its tryouts there. Many of our German neighbors who came to us after a stay in the vicinity of Freeport, Illinois, brought with them a side-splitting story—to them—of how a German farmer there never called anything but Rich Fred had tried out this three-phase machine, if I may so describe it. He gave a party to show off his new tool. A crowd assembled. The wheat was nice and ripe and dry and the machine worked beautifully. The wheat box was filled and emptied. The straw lay in windrows along the sides of the fields of standing grain. The beer flowed as freely as it should when so many good Germans got together to celebrate so great an event—so freely that it fuddled the brains of the operators to the extent that they forgot to put back the wheat box after emptying; and for a long summer's afternoon, the wonderful machine sang its song, cut the grain, thrashed it—and scattered it back on the earth from whence it had grown.

"Rich Fred yust said damn, an' laid down under the machine and vent to schleep," was the end of the tale. "It vas awful funny."

When Iowa was born there lived in De Kalb County, Illinois, two brothers, Charles W. and W. W. Marsh, farmers who were already at work on an invention which was destined to transform me from rather a bad hand in a harvest field to a good one.

I have just looked through two encyclopedias for the names of people named Marsh who have really done things in the world. I find Adam Marsh who lived more than a thousand years ago; and beyond dying did little except to be a bishop, and teach some-

thing to Roger Bacon. George Perkins Marsh died in 1882, after writing some forgotten poems, some equally forgotten scientific books, and a monumental work on *The Camel, his Organization, Habits, and Uses, with Reference to his Introduction into the United States.* Herbert Marsh was a British bishop who did nothing save engage in ecclesiastical controversy, and is forgotten. Narcissus Marsh was archbishop of Dublin a hundred or more years ago—and that's all! O. T. Marsh was an American paleontologist, who in 1880 described the extinct toothed birds of North America, dinosaurs and other fossil remains. He was, I believe, a very exemplary paleontologist. Unless we wade into Pontine Marshes, this tells the tale of the family so far as the encyclopedists are concerned. And I assert that my friend Wilbur Marsh, of Waterloo, Iowa, who has for years and years tried to keep the breath of life in the vestigial Democratic Party of Iowa, is fully as much entitled to recognition as any of them—for he has essayed a miracle.

These two De Kalb County farmers, though neglected by the bookmakers, changed the world. They invented a machine which made it possible for two men binding grain to do as much as four or five did before, and do it more easily. They lifted the new soil and the new communities of the Mississippi Valley, of the prairies of western Canada, of Argentina, of Australia and the white man's world to a pitch of productiveness in foodstuffs which has not yet ceased its revolutionary effect on mankind. They did this by creating a machine on which two men could ride as they bound the grain elevated to them by the

mechanism which cut it. Moreover, they gave us the only type of reaping machine to which the self-binder has ever been successfully attached, and this finally multiplied the efficiency of the harvest-gang by something like five.

The Marsh brothers produced revolution in the basic task of producing cereals. If any inventors in history deserve a place in the list of the great, they do. They invented and built the Marsh Harvester.

My early life was so modified by them and a few other geniuses—mine and a million others—that no one can say what it would have been without them. The steel plow, which finally came to be mounted on wheels and run in gangs; the reaper and mower, which was little save a new device applying the principle of the scissors to the cutting of grain and grass; the horse rake; the wheeled tools with steel shovels for seeding and cultivating; the triumphant development of the thrashing machine; and added to these finally, the internal combustion engine—made the prairies blossom as the rose, gave the railways something on which to live, placed a great population far in the interior where it is dependent on railways, killed our seamanship and turned us from a nation of sailors to one of landsmen, broke the backs of the farmers of our Eastern States and of Great Britain and Europe generally, and was felt by almost every people from the rice eaters of Asia to the sugar planters of the West Indies. If Eli Whitney, with his cotton gin, made slavery profitable in the South, and thus brought on our War between the States, some of these later inventions gave the North the men who faced our southern brethren at Pea Ridge, Donelson,

Pittsburgh Landing and Chickamauga, and finally followed Sherman to the sea.

The Marsh brothers invented their harvester just before the war, but its popular use was postponed until after the peace. I was growing up, and as I grew I had mighty hard work to bind my station after the old reapers which left the sheaves on the stubble. My weakened back, added to the fact that I was two yards long, made any work hard for me which involved stooping. I was not a good harvest hand until the Marsh Harvester came along. On this I could ride and bind as much as almost any one, for I did not have to stoop much for the sheaves. They came rolling up between canvases and lay in a metal trough to be gathered up in my long arms, while the horses carried me and my companion binder about the field.

No sooner was the Marsh Harvester introduced than inventors began the work of devising the self-binder. They were after the only job I ever had in binding at which I was good. We used to discuss the matter of the practicability of a machine which would make the bands with straw as we did. I do not suppose any inventor ever tried this impossible thing, and the first binders which I ever saw bound with wire. They worked successfully, but the wire bands were a nuisance. They went into the straw piles in spite of all we could do. If the straw was fed to stock, the wires got into the beasts' eyes or their stomachs, and did them harm. In any case, they did not rot; and in a few years the wire binder would have filled the farm yards and the soil of the fields with wires. So the inventors worked on machines which would

bind with twine. Several of these were put on the market; but I believe most manufacturers finally adopted the invention of a genius called Appleby.

It was a marvelous machine to me. It waited until the horses had drawn the thing along so far as to accumulate enough of the cut grain to make a sheaf, and then reached over with a metal finger carrying the twine, compressed the gavel into a sheaf, knotted the twine about the bundle and kicked it off or threw it into a bundle carrier. It was a triumph of mechanical genius. If not genius, why did so many inventors fail with their twine binders? All the farmers needed to do when the self-binder appeared was to put it on his old Marsh Harvester in the place of the two men; but the really practicable thing was to buy a new machine, which instead of cutting a swath five feet wide—a wide enough swath for even the most ambitious man who bound half of it with a good fast-walking team—took a seven-foot swath, reaping as much as three men were supposed to handle with the original Marsh Harvester.

The last harvest before I left the farm, I had grown to be a big yokel, and had something like fifty or sixty acres of grain to cut. I arranged with some boys of my own age who had a new self-binder to cut my grain, paying for the cutting in part at least by making a hand in their harvest. I was supposed to put in my time shocking up; which consists in setting up the bound grain into what some people call stooks or cocks, thus betraying their ignorance of what they are talking about. "Stook" is a British word for what the American farmer always calls a shock, which is perfectly good English anywhere. A cock is a pile of hay or loose straw.

My task was shocking in a double sense; for this binder missed about one knot in three. I went to the other boys and revolted. I could shock up in one day, I told them, what the machine would cut—if they didn't sweat the horses too much; but I'd be danged if I could do it after a machine which left a third of the grain in loose gavels all scattered from where I felt as though I was to breakfast—if you get my meaning. They saw my point, but what could we do about it? The farmer boy learns to be an engineer. We did the reverse of the thing which farmers had done when they took off the platform on which the binders rode and put on the self-binder. We took off the binder which would not work and put on the old Marsh Harvester platform, mounted it and bound the grain by hand. And we had our work cut out for us, you may be assured; for this machine, be it remembered, cut a seven-foot swath instead of the five-and-a-half foot strip which two men were supposed to handle.

The grain stood shoulder high. The lead team of four horses were a pair of prancing roans into whom some devil had entered, calling upon them to swamp us with the Niagara of grain which poured up for us to bind. Each of us drove once around the field and bound two rounds. The round of driving gave one a chance to get his breath, cool off and laugh at the others. We were filled with the spirit of competition, and each strove so to drive as to make the machine cut its full seven feet. To bury the other fellows in the flood of grain coming up from the bowels of the infernal tool was a joke.

We sweat with crimsoned faces until our dusty shirts were wringing wet; but we kept that trough

from clogging—which none of the neighbors would believe. They said that no two men could bind a seven-foot cut in such grain as that with those two roans in the lead. But in spite of the sun which beat down upon our heads, of the bleeding hands which could not be favored in the maniacal struggle with the grain, in spite of the impossibility of the thing, we did it; and we made a sort of adventure of it. For the grain was ours, you see. Human effort grows ineffective just in the proportion that men are taken from tasks which they do for themselves and are put to work for others.

CHAPTER XIX

THE TRAGEDY OF THE WHEAT

Who of my readers remembers Frank Norris, who died in the midst of writing his trilogy on wheat, after finishing *The Octopus* and *The Pit?* I should like to read those novels again. Norris died in 1902 at the early age of thirty-two. If he had lived, he would, I feel sure, have escaped from the influence of Zola and given us even greater fiction than the books I have named, and they were powerful. But if he had lived my life, he could have written a story of wheat which would have outdone anything he had planned on the grain which keeps us alive. It might have been called *The Tragedy of Wheat.*

We grew wonderful wheat at first; the only problem was to get it to market and to live on the proceeds when it was sold. My father hauled his wheat from the Iowa River to Waterloo, and even to Iowa City, when it was the railhead for our part of the country; hauled it slowly over mere trails across the prairie. It took him three days to market a load of wheat in Waterloo. I remember his telling us one morning of a dream he had had. His dream was that after hauling a load to Waterloo, he was offered only thirty cents a bushel for it.

"I'll be goshblasted," he thought he replied, "if

I'll take thirty cents! I'll haul it back home first and give it to the poor!"

My mother gave him a long look and burst into a gale of laughter. Father looked dazed for a moment; and then the huge joke came to him also of the Quick family giving anything to the poor. It was a jolly breakfast. The poor! Good heavens and earth, where could any one be found poorer than we? We were impoverished by wheat growing.

But the worst, however, was yet to come. A harvest came when we found that something was wrong with the wheat. No longer did the stalks stand clean and green as of old until they went golden in the sun. The broad green blades were spotted red and black with rust. Still it grew tall and rank; but as it matured it showed signs of disease. The heads did not fill well. Some blight was at work on it. However, we thought next year all would be well again. And when it grew worse year by year, it became a blight not only on the life of the grain but on human life as well. Wheat was almost our sole cash crop. If it failed, what should we do? And it was failing!

We were incurring, of course, the penalty for a one-crop system. We ought to have known that it was inevitable. Yet even the agricultural experts did not know what was the trouble until a quarter of a century afterward; when it was worked out, I believe, by the scientists of the North Dakota College of Agriculture. Preying on the wheat were fungi, bacteria and molds. We sowed wheat after wheat until every field became a culture bed for every antagonistic organism; but instead of finding a remedy, we were only amazed and driven to despair by the calamity.

Some of our people thought that one crop of wheat after another had robbed the soil of some necessary property; but my father pointed out the fact that not even on newly broken sod could good wheat now be grown. It must be something else. Maybe the climate had changed. If it had, why it would change back next year. So we went on, as farmers nearly always do, sticking to the system which had become established. The new breaking, we now know, had become infected with the wheat diseases from the surrounding fields; or the infections were blown to it by the winds.

This era gave me my first contact with the phenomenon which puzzles so many city people. If the farmers are losing money on a certain crop, why in the world don't they change to something else? It is not so easy to change as the city man may think. The wheat growers of the Central States at the time of this writing have been losing money on their wheat for years; but if they endeavor to change, they are confronted by a great problem. Such a change means the adoption of an entirely new rotation of crops. They have for years used a three- or four-year rotation—wheat, then corn, then clover. The sowing of the wheat gives them the chance to put in their fertilizer. They are used to this system. Any change from it involves the risking of a new crop on which losses are also probable.

I have an orchard which I planted years ago when apples were a money-making crop. I have spent a dozen years or more in developing it. For the past few years it has been a losing game; but there are the trees just getting into full bearing, and I carry them along, losing money every year, looking for a

change in conditions. The manufacturer can shut down when the market is bad, or specialize for a few weeks or months on a thing which pays. The business man may slow up on purchases and narrow his operations, pursuing one policy one month and making a change the next, always trying things out in a small way and feeling his projects out. But the farmer's experiment always takes a year and involves so great a loss in case of bad judgment or misfortune that he perforce becomes very conservative. We were so in our devotion to wheat. It was tragic, but natural.

It was a severe strain on the morale. Our next neighbor on the east was a German farmer who suffered with the rest of us. Over on the other side of us lived Frank Crippen. Probably no two men were farther apart in matters of opinion and conduct than Crippen and Riemann. The former was, to say the least, a latitudinarian. He worked on Sunday if he took a notion. He sneered at piety. He looked upon the wine when it was red; and then failed to move himself aright. Riemann, on the other hand, clung to his church and its forms.

Once when my mother was endeavoring to drum up an audience for a minister who was to hold services in our schoolhouse, she asked Mr. Riemann to come and bring his family. It was a Yankee gathering and Jake shied from it a little. Finally he asked about something which seemed vital to him.

"Does he kneel down when he prays?" he inquired.

"No," replied my mother.

"Den maybe I come," said Riemann. "But it makes me so damned mad to see a preacher kneel down when he prays dat I can't see."

Actuated by his sort of piety, Riemann one Sunday morning when the wheat was in full blight, had held his family religious services, attained quiet of spirit, greased his boots, put on his other clothes, loaded his numerous family into the lumber wagon, and started on his four-mile trip to what we called "the Dutch church," which has continued to serve the community to this day. I suppose that he was trying hard to keep his mind on his blessings and off the blackening wheat by the roadside, when he saw Crippen emerging from the field with his hand full of the plucked heads of the staff of our physical and financial lives. Crippen came to the house and told us about what took place.

He put his foot up on the hub of Riemann's wagon after it came to a halt, and began descanting on the awful condition of the farmers. I can imagine about what he said. Everything had gone to the devil. The wheat wouldn't pay for cutting. The grain there was in the rotten straw wouldn't make bread. So far from being No. 1 or No. 2, or even No. 3, it would grade as "rejected" only. It wouldn't pay wages for hauling it to town. We all might as well quit and let our farms go for the mortgages. Any one who was fool enough to move into such a hell of a country as Iowa deserved to starve. Well, we'd starve, all right!

Riemann sat listening to this flood of pessimism and felt it surging against the dike of spiritual quiet which he had built about his soul. This Yankee neighbor was destroying his preparation for religious comfort. His glance strayed from the horses' ears and fixed itself sternly on the face of Crippen the tempter. From sternness it passed to rage. He pulled up

on the lines as a signal for his horses to start, and spake.

"Why, damn your lousy Yankee soul," said he; "don't you know that our Lord yet lives?"

And the wagon load of rural misery moved up, leaving another bit of depression standing in the blue-joint grass by the road.

"For a minute," Frank asserted, "I thought I'd foller the Dutch fool up and give him a lickin'. But his team was hittin' a fast trot, and I thought how I'd look chasin' him. I guess I'll forget it."

The fields of grain had always been a delight to me. Nothing can be more beautiful than a gently rolling landscape covered with growing wheat. The shadows of the clouds swept over it majestically. The waves of shadow as the grain bent to the breeze, straightened and then bent again, used to bring tears to my eyes—tears of sheer delight—it was so marvelously lovely. But now all the poetry went out of it. There was no joy for the soul of the boy who was steeped in such poetry as he could stumble upon, in these grain-fields threatened by grasshoppers, eaten by chinchbugs, blackened with molds and rusts, their blades specked as with the shed blood of the husbandman, their gold dulled by disease, their straw crinkling down in dead brittleness instead of rising and falling and swaying with the beautiful resiliency of health and abundance.

The passage at arms between our two neighbors showed the stress which bent and almost broke us. We looked about in vain for aid, and none came. Some, of course, looked to the government for aid. Other people had help, they said, why not the farmers?

The government gave the manufacturers a tariff, didn't it, so they could have the whole market to themselves? Then why couldn't it do something for us? This was about the time that specie payments were resumed, and "resumption" was a word much bandied about.

The silver question had not yet reached us, to puzzle and divide. We were on a paper-money basis. We looked to Congress to make times better by the issuance of greenbacks. Tom Brown, one of our neighbors, stopped in the front yard one morning, and, of course, the hard times became the subject of conversation. He brought the news that Congress had just passed a law calling for the issuance of some thirty million dollars of new greenbacks. This ought to help us some, he thought. I doubt if he or any of us had any idea of the way in which such an issue affected trade and prices through inflation; the argument merely was that it would make money plentier. My mother looked out over the wheat-fields and refused to show enthusiasm.

"Thirty millions is a lot of money," she admitted—though it seems ridiculous now—"but by the time it gets spread out as far as Iowa, it won't make much difference. It's like pourin' a pail of water in the river."

I can't help thinking that her summing up of the case was a good one.

All this time, while we were playing the rôle of the tortured victims in the tragedy of the wheat, we were feeling our way toward some way out. We knew that our fields would grow great crops of maize—it was a good corn country. But if there was more than one

person who grew and fed cattle for the market there, I did not know of it. The average small farmer grew into the combination of hogs and corn. Gradually we changed over from wheat farming to big corn-fields and populous hog lots. And then the price of both corn and pork went down, down, down, until corn sold for less than ten cents a bushel in our depreciated money and hogs for even less than three cents a pound. We had not found out about the balanced ration and the hog's need of pasture; and after a few generations of a diet of corn, the swine lost vitality and the crop of young pigs failed save where there was milk for them. The villain of misfortune still pursued us.

Our fuel was now soft coal, and the cold winters of Iowa called for much fuel. A time came when a load of corn drawn to market would just about pay for a load of coal to haul home; so to save the long-drawn dragging of the two loads over the fourteen miles to the railway and back, we began using the corn itself for fuel. To the older people who had been reared in an atmosphere of the cheap fuel of the forests and the scarcity of cereals for food, there was something sinful in this. My Grandmother Coleman had a language of her own which consisted of groans, and this she used whenever she saw the great ears of corn going into the stove.

"When I think," she would say, "of the folks in this world that are hungry, it seems a sin to burn up victuals like this."

"Well," my father would reply, "I don't see as it's my duty to put in my time and freeze myself to death haulin' corn to town to trade it for coal, an' maybe pay some boot for the sake of gettin' it."

Gradually we worked out a better *modus vivendi*—worked it out in a welter of debt and a depression which has characterized the rural mind to this day. Corn and hogs came to pay us as little as had wheat; yet for a while they were our only recourse, for the soil refused to grow wheat. For a long time there was plenty of open prairie on which cattle could be grazed freely. My first economic usefulness was that of a herd boy. I was a very bad rider and was in the habit of falling off when my horse turned quickly, owing to my feebleness of spine; and I was never able to leap upon my horse's back from the ground, or even climb up. So I developed the scheme of getting on his neck when he put his head down to graze and sliding to place when he lifted it. Yet I herded the cattle summer after summer. Then the expanding acres of wheat land cut us off from any extended range of free grass. We had no fencing until barbed wire came in. So our cows were picketed on the prairie, led to water and cared for much as the Danes handle their cows now.

In spite of these difficulties, however, it gradually dawned upon us that by the sale of butter we were getting a little money from time to time. And though eggs were sometimes as low as eight cents a dozen, they brought in some funds. The skim milk restored our hogs to health. Without conscious planning, we were entering the business of mixed farming. My mother's butter was famed in all the near-by villages. In view of all the pains she took with it, it should have been; for she met the hot weather of our Iowa summers by hanging both cream and butter down the well where it was cool. Finally a creamery was started in Holland, a small town near us; and by this time we

had a nice little herd of cows. A tank was made where water could be pumped through it and in this we set our cans of milk; and the cream hauler of the creamery came, skimmed off the cream, gave us tickets for it and hauled it away, thus giving us the cash when we went to town and saving the women the work of making the butter. It was the first contact of the factory system with the Iowa farm.

All this made life easier both as to labor and money. But it was not our only amelioration. We began to have a better food supply. Our apple trees never did anything, for the varieties which thrive in Iowa were not known when our orchard was set out. But our strawberries, raspberries, grapes, gooseberries, currants and cherries yielded abundantly. I had a patch of raspberries which I pruned and tended on a system of my own which gave us all we could consume and furnished dividends for our friends. In place of the old regimen of dried fruits and just dry groceries, we were surfeited on jams, jellies, preserves and other delicious viands; and with our supply of milk and cream, found the pioneer epoch definitely past so far as the larder was concerned.

The prairie had been tamed. Iowa had been civilized. Our eighty-acre farm was furnishing us a real living for the first time. The era of extensive farming and the consolidation of farms into larger holdings had scarcely begun. The curse of high land values had not yet come upon us. Though our incomes were very low and we were still oppressed by debts, I am inclined to believe that the years which definitely marked the end of the tragedy of the wheat were the best years Iowa agriculture has seen.

Painted by E. F. Ward

HERDING CATTLE ON THE IOWA PRAIRIE.

The farmer is often accused by the city dweller of being a confirmed calamity howler. He is. He is such because almost every calamity which comes on the land hits him sooner or later. Whenever any other industry shifts from under an economic change it shifts it in part upon the farmer, and the farmer is unable to shift it in his turn; while most other shiftees can, by adding to prices or wages, get from under the load. The farmer is so placed that there is nothing beyond him but the wall. He is crushed against it. There is nothing under him but the earth. He is pressed into it. He is the end of the line in the economic game of crack the whip, and he is cracked off. He has been cracked off into city life by the million.

The utterances of some great men to the effect that this is not a bad thing leave out of account the pregnant truth that, after all, the basis of civilization is agriculture; that our farming class, not being composed of fools, will not stay on the soil with better city opportunities open to them; that once divorced from the soil a people never have returned to it; and that what we are observing is in danger of becoming the progressive ruin of our cities and our civilization. I have been describing the history of one family and one generation of farmers so that my readers may understand if they try why farmers are likely to be calamity howlers. The howl comes from the contact place of the calamity.

CHAPTER XX

OUR GREAT MEN AND OTHERS

As I look over what I have written, I can almost hear a chorus of protest from those who will insist that I have done injustice to the intellectual status and the culture of the pioneers. They will have plenty of authority to quote against me. The literature of the subject is full of data showing that our earliest settlers were many of them university men, that even among those who were unschooled there was a great thirst for literature, and a phenomenal success in quenching it.

Did not the Calls, Inghams and others have their meetings in Algona to hear a weekly paper and to discuss the events of the world, including literary matters? Were not the Weares, Allisons, Cooks, Hubbards and others in Sioux City people with all the educational advantages of the East? Was not Enoch Eastman, of Eldora, a cultured person of powerful intellect? Were not C. F. Clarkson and his sons, James S. and R. P. Clarkson, pioneers in my own county, men of such caliber that in later years they became the greatest journalists in Iowa? And were they not living within a few miles of the spot where I in my boyhood found the intellectual desert which I have described? Are not the source books from which historians will write their histories full of facts

showing that most of the Iowa counties were settled by such men?

Yes, all these things are true. Few of the documents have come from the pens of the boys and girls who lived out on the farms and associated with the general run of settlers and their children. Our family knew the Clarksons about as the average person who reads this knows Judge Gary of the steel industry or the federal judge in his district. They were figures in our minds, but their effect upon our lives was negligible. Frank Crippen's family and that of Jake Riemann were much more influential. Yet we did see the Clarksons, and Eastman and Bob McBride, the editor of the Eldora *Ledger,* and other big people once in a while.

Coker Fifield Clarkson—though not a college man, I believe—is a good example of the sort of men who give to the pioneers their reputation for advanced culture and education. Their reputation for basic intelligence and enterprise they richly deserve. Mr. Clarkson was a man of wealth, as wealth went in those days, and came from Indiana, where he had been a newspaper man, to make his fortune in farming. His farm was just in the edge of Grundy County; but his nearest town was Eldora, over in Hardin. His mansion was famed all over the country as Clarkson's Gothic House. It was a palatial structure, as I remember it; but I suspect that it was great only by comparison with the dwellings of the rest of us. His two sons, Richard P. Clarkson and James S. Clarkson, worked for their father on this farm for some years; but they grew weary of it and found employment as compositors on the *Iowa State Register* at Des Moines—

now just the *Register*. The family had money enough to buy this paper, and with Richard on the business side, James acting as editor and their father carrying on a page of agricultural matter, they were eminently successful.

I have a book which was given my sister by him whom we always called Jimmie Clarkson as a prize at school. Jimmie, who in later life got the nickname of Ret from his newspaper pseudonym, was her teacher before there was any schoolhouse in the neighborhood, when my grandfather's back kitchen was used as a schoolroom. Ret Clarkson presided over this temple of learning and cookery for one term at least. The highest praise our people could give him was to say, "He was a good teacher." His life after he left our neighborhood was a continuous success in journalism, in the accumulation of wealth and in politics. He it was who as first assistant postmaster general distributed the thirty-eight thousand post-offices which made it possible for Benjamin Harrison to defeat James G. Blaine when Blaine made his last attempt on the presidency. These spoils, however, could not give Harrison victory at the polls against Cleveland. Clarkson ceased to be an individual and became a name to us. He became a great figure in the practical politics of the nation, a holder of high federal office, and finally a New Yorker. I do not remember ever to have seen him. When I was writing *The Hawkeye* I talked with members of his family on the subject of going to New York for the purpose of having a talk with him on old times in Iowa; but it was not thought that he was strong enough to make this possible.

With us, his brother Richard—or Dick, as he was always called—was much the greater man, until after Ret had bloomed out into a great politician. Dick had done something really great. He was the first man in our vicinage who ever husked one hundred bushels of corn in a day. This was achievement. We had to learn corn husking, by the way, through generations of experience. I remember when forty bushels a day was considered a big day's work. I was grown up before that knack had been developed whereby the corn husker ripped the husks with one motion of one hand, and with a single movement jerked the ear from the stalk and tossed it into the wagon.

The husking of one hundred bushels a day would not now put any man within forty rods of the money in any contest in Illinois or Iowa. This triumph of mechanical skill is as epochal a thing mechanically as putting a curve on a baseball, or that system of recurring shots which Jake Schaefer the elder worked out in billiards, thus revolutionizing the game, or the plangent style by which Liszt made the piano what it is as a musical instrument. It made the art all over. Dick Clarkson was a pioneer in it; but it must be admitted that he did not husk and crib his one hundred bushels. He husked it in piles on the ground and others gathered it up. But all the same, it was a mighty deed back in the 'sixties in Iowa.

Coker Fifield Clarkson became Father Clarkson to Iowa from his paternal connection with the owners of the *Register* and his widely read farm writings therein. With us he was Senator Clarkson, or for some reason Governor. I believe he was a candidate for governor once. Like some others I might mention, he

was more successful as a farm writer than as an actual farmer. I think it was Jimmie Hardin, now a banker in Eldora, who won local fame once by writing the *Register* asking if Father Clarkson would not oblige his readers by giving his methods of growing cocklebburs. The governor was a stern conservative person, who looked upon any movement of the farmers to secure amelioration of their conditions save through the Republican Party and the tariff as what we should now call Bolshevism; though he was very active in the farmers' fight against the barbed-wire combine, in which contest A. B. Cummins, then a young lawyer in Des Moines, gained his first dividend of popularity among the grangers.

My father was proud of a very few things in his life; but of one of them he occasionally spoke. This was talking up to Mr. Clarkson once when father went to the raising of the Clarkson barn—the biggest barn in all that countryside. It seems that the governor, after the neighbors, with their pike poles, had raised the huge bents to place and the great frame stood ready to be clothed with its walls and roof, gave the men a little talk on what my old friend Mathews called getting on in the world.

"Any man who really wants it," said the governor, "if he will just depend on industry and economy, can have as good a barn as that."

My father's mind revolted at what he would have called sophistry if he had known the word.

"That's dod-blasted nonsense!" said he.

What the governor replied, if anything, or what the assembled yeomen thought of this dreadful hardihood on my father's part, is lost to history; but father always rather prided himself on it.

James S. Clarkson.
Richard P. Clarkson.

Levi L. Kinefelter.
Coker F. Clarkson.

The Clarksons were not college men, I believe; but they were men of ability and character, and they soon left us. There were such in most of the counties. Many of them were pioneers. To them we owe in large measure the character of the institutions of all the states. This is only partly creditable to them. They carried on the government. They were not, however, the intimate formative element in the neighborhood life, or in the individual lives of the young which the written annals of the time will seem to show to the historians of the future. Most boys and girls grew up as I did, living the lives of semi-hermits, finding the printed page through their schools and their uneducated teachers, and in nine cases out of ten sinking back to a common level in intellectual frustration. That I was able to escape was a matter partly of luck and partly of my possession of an abnormal thirst, first for reading and second for different—I shall not say higher—activities.

I have told of the really great influence upon my life of the ex-riverman who blew through my existence like a wandering breeze. The next person who put into it some of the yeast of directive development was John D. Anderson. There must be many people in Butler County, Iowa, who still remember him, for he was afterward county superintendent of schools of that county, and died there. I do not believe that he was a very extraordinary man; but he meant much to the fourteen-year-old boy who was for one term his pupil in District Number 9.

My father was school director, and Anderson came to the house one day to apply for the school, as was the custom among us. He was engaged, and came to

our house to board. He had seen the world. I suspect that he had been something of a drifter after his service in the army in the Civil War. He played the violin in a style a little above that of our local fiddlers. He was a reader and a thinker. For several terms of school I had been conscious of my superiority in the matter of knowledge, and especially of vision, to the teachers of our school. Anderson commanded my respect and admiration. He not only knew the school books but much more, and he made an intellectual companion of me. I had been for years living what seems to me the strangest of double lives; though I am sure that if we only knew it, our children habitually inhabit spheres so astonishingly alien to our knowledge that we should be astounded if we could draw aside the curtain and look into the strange spiritual universe about us. They are like the infinitesimal solar systems, so impenetrable and so complex, which we now know to exist in the very atoms of the seemingly dead matter of which the world is composed.

I had been living the life of an ordinary farmer's boy; but sometimes I was a poet. I even used to compose verses as I lay in bed; not ballads, but attempts at stately stanzas like the few verses I knew of Spenser and Thomson. Sometimes I was a great general, like Napoleon or Washington. I was a great painter. Sometimes I was even a wonderfully successful farmer—but not often. I invented epoch-making devices. I gained fame as a zoologist, botanist or exploring scientist of some sort. I was always the hero, you may be sure of that; and in the main it was in the field of literature. It is rather odd that I never dreamed of writing blood-and-thunder tales or sickly

romances like those which formed the bulk of my literary diet. Of this dream world of mine I never said a single word to any one, not even my mother. Had I been caught out in the open in the nakedness of betrayal, I should have blushed myself all away.

John Anderson found the level of the attainable for my visions; and though my castles in Spain were as numerous and as defiant of the law of gravitation as ever, I occasionally lapsed into common sense. He helped me by just talking to me as man to man; sometimes about his service in the army, sometimes of his adventures, with sane comments thereon; sometimes of the affairs of the school and the neighborhood, and often of the lives of men he had known or studied. He gave me tasks which called for judgment instead of rote learning; but the best of my companionship with him is found in those times when we sat by the roadside on the way home from school, or strolled slowly along, just talking. He was the first man of some education who came into my life who knew a little of the outside world and assumed that I was to take a place in it. He just happened along and stopped for a talk, and after he left I never saw him or heard from him again; but like the ex-riverman, he was to me a light bringer. I wonder if as we go through life we give out such influence to many boys and girls. If we do, what a responsibility rests upon us! It is a good thing probably that we do not feel this; or we should be so embarrassed that we should muff every chance.

CHAPTER XXI

I WITNESS A POLITICAL REVOLT

The distress of our pioneer community had those political reactions which in such a government as ours are as natural as any fight of an organism against attack or disease. The farmers revolted. Their revolt, though peaceful, was an integral part of a long series of such revulsions of public sentiment on our frontiers, which have been basically formative of American political life. It was exactly a century before our Mississippi Valley revolt that the Whisky Insurrection in western Pennsylvania, provoked by Alexander Hamilton by means of the excise tax in order that the federal government might have a chance to show its teeth, grew in the main out of a lack of transportation.

Those Scotch-Irish had no way of marketing their grain save in the form of whisky, and no people ever more fully believed themselves completely justified in their revolt. The sentiment which inspired them existed all along the frontier west of the Blue Ridge, down through the Virginias and Carolinas to the frontiers of Georgia. A few years prior to that the people in western Massachusetts rose in arms in Shays' Rebellion and much more blood flowed than is likely to be known to any but the close student of history. Those Yankee rebels were in bitter distress

by reason of debt, imprisonment for debt and what we would now term the deflation following the Revolutionary War. These rebellions were but the peak of the iceberg of discontent; the great body of it swam out of sight in the ocean of popular resentment, back in the forests, among the working men of the towns and cities, and on the farms; and when a great leader appeared in the person of Andrew Jackson, the people harboring it took control of the United States Government and held it for a generation or so. And our Iowa political revolt, acting on party policies, had a success which is hidden in the intricacies of party strategy.

With us, it appeared at first in the wild-fire spread through the whole country-side of the Patrons of Husbandry, or, as it was even then called, the Grange. Whether or not there was any spirit of political revolt in this excellent order in the beginning, I do not know. I believe that their constitution then forbade any organized political activities in the order itself; but such was the feeling, in our community at least, that wherever two or three farmers were gathered together, even in the name of the Grange, there was politics in the midst of them.

My father and mother, swept along on the tide of the popular movement, joined the Grange. Their attitude toward it—and their dropping out of it—is eloquent proof of the difficulty of organizing the farmers of America. I remember hearing them talking about the matter. They looked upon the costumes worn—the regalia—as silly and childish; and the mystic ceremonies were to them a sort of thing to which grown people ought not to stoop. They did not, so far as I remember, object to the calling of the head of the

Grange the Master; but I heard one of my aunts say that she would never call any one master but Jesus. It was all very narrow and limited; but there you have the intractability of a people, after a couple of centuries of individualistic struggle with forests, wild beasts and Indians. It takes a desperate situation to force them to cooperate, as President Coolidge and his commission will find out in time. The Grange then was teaching cooperation and practising it. My parents were kept out, as were millions of others, by a shamefaced self-consciousness in the dress and forms adopted by this new and excellent order.

Governor Clarkson saw in the Grange a new force, and I suspect that he, as a rather reactionary politician, felt it a duty to try to guide it along such harmless lines as getting cheaper fencing and the cooperative handling of commodities. He became a Grange organizer, or at least a prominent Grange leader.

The summer before my fifteenth birthday the Grange movement was just past the height of its first swell. It had reached the point at which the minds of many members were looking about for things to do outside the holding of meetings, wearing regalia and talking of the fight with the barbed-wire monopoly and savings through cooperative stores. A crowd of disturbers working outside the Grange had taken steps toward organizing a new political party, and had issued a call for what we called an Anti-Monopoly Convention. Farmers everywhere were talking of this. It was a revolt against the Republican Party—the party which had saved the Union; and to turn against it was in many minds something like treason—no matter what it did or failed to do.

The Grange celebrated the Fourth of July in a great picnic that year at Hickory Grove, about three miles from our farm, and every one was invited. There I saw Governor Clarkson in action on an occasion which he must have remembered to his dying day; and with a single exception, it was the only time I ever saw him. Moreover, it was the first time I had ever been in a big crowd—no, the second.

My first big crowd was at a circus in Grundy Center a year or so before; a little one-ring circus with a vestigial menagerie: a horse-drawn show which waded through the mud from Waterloo and arrived so late that there was no street parade. Their troupe of elephants consisted of one youthful pachyderm—nine years old, its keeper told me—which got mad at being obliged to push the wagons into line with its tusks and ran down the street, upsetting farm rigs and raising rim generally. A thrill! It almost made good the default of the parade. And I had fallen in love that day with the Circassian Lady in the side show, and bought her photograph, which I still treasure. So I was a veteran in crowds!

Yet so unused was I to spending money that when my mother gave me a five-dollar bill, telling me to get it changed at one of the stands at the celebration, and to buy half a dozen lemons for lemonade, I was obliged to work out the task much as a savage might have done. I went to the fruit stand and very politely asked the proprietor if he wouldn't change that five-dollar bill into dimes. He gruffly refused—and how I hated him! The next vender stopped his outcry when I asked him for five dollars' worth of dimes and told me to run along and not bother him. Then

it dawned upon me that there must be something wrong in my method. I stood a while in thought; and as in uffish thought I stood, it occurred to me that if I should ask for half a dozen lemons, and hand the dealer the five-dollar bill, he would just simply have to give me the change. I did so. He did so. I went back to my mother, blushing at my greenness—and I know of no incident which can more adequately show how extreme it was. But those two merchants lost my trade. I bought the lemons and a bunch of fire-crackers—the first I had ever possessed—of an obscure dealer who had not insulted me.

It was an historic gathering. The day was one of those bright July days when the Iowa sky sparkles into vivid blue, flecked with great white clouds. The wheat had not yet blighted to the harvest. The corn stood in rows of rank green, most of it laid by. There was thus a little breathing space in the drudgery of the farm—for every one but the women; and they came in hundreds of wagons with their children, to get tired in a new spot. The people of the towns came out in force, to meet the farmers and one another and to hear Governor Clarkson's speech. The farmers who were not Grangers were there; the Grangers came in long processions, bearing their banners, and the shock to Governor Clarkson when he saw some of those banners, flooded his stern and rubicund face with red. The chief offender was the Lincoln Center Grange. One of its banners was justly to be criticized, for it kept the word of "non-partisanship" to the ear, but broke it to the heart.

"As citizens," it ran, "we favor the Anti-Monopoly Convention. As Grangers, we know no party."

I can imagine the wrath of Governor Clarkson as he read this. He had warmed this Grange serpent in his bosom; and here in this casuistical way it was stinging him, opposing the Republican Party, which had sent him to the state senate, which probably had more things in store for him, which had saved the Union, and which looked for its funds to men controlling the very monopolies under fire. And standing by the Anti-Monopoly banner was another, borne by this same Grange, which blazoned to the world that this seditious flag was no ill-timed joke. It read, "We Mean Business!"

I suspect that Governor Clarkson took this display to be the work of a small group only. I feel certain that he felt perfectly sure that the revolt would scatter at his first attack. I know that he was fiercely angry. As the minister offered prayer, he sat bolt upright, staring grimly before him. He never glanced in the direction of Lincoln Center as the choir sang *The Star-Spangled Banner,* breaking on the word "glare" in 1874 just as choirs do now. He seemed oblivious of the sentiment of revolt in the Declaration of Independence when it was read.

The chairman rose and announced that we should now have the pleasure of listening to an address by the Honorable Coker Fifield Clarkson. Then Clarkson rose, his face empurpled by long suppressed rage.

"I decline to speak," he shouted, pointing at the Lincoln Center banner, "while that dirty political rag floats over my head!"

I recognized the crisis, though I didn't know just what it meant; and I crowded into the ranks of the Lincoln Center bannerists. Those bronzed and

bearded farmers rose as one man and clustered about the flags. The guttural murmur, like the low growling of a fierce beast, was the rumble of defiance from their throats. I was close enough to hear in it throaty oaths. The chairman—I have tried to remember and have consulted those who were there as to his name, but in vain—looked as if he was wishing that he had stayed at home and plowed corn. I remember that presently he put to vote the question as to whether the "dirty political rag" was to remain displayed and advanced, or banished. One of the Lincoln Center farmers—I think it was Aleck Relyea or Charlie Philbrick, thinking no doubt that the crowd would be on Clarkson's side—shouted that certain sanguinary things would take place before that banner was removed. Why shouldn't the crowd be with the Governor? It always had been.

"All in favor of taking away the banner, please rise," said the chairman.

And then an astounding thing happened. Nobody rose—that is, only one man arose. One of our prominent county politicians, Mr. Daniel Kerr, a lawyer of Grundy Center, rose, looked about and saw that he was alone in his fidelity to Clarkson, and sank back in his seat, his red head glowing in the dull mass of the assembly. On the call, "Contrary, please rise," the whole assemblage came up like a wave and the chairman announced that the banner would remain.

Radicalism had won. The governor was beaten. Would he refuse to speak? No, he reversed his decision and spoke. Although it is only a little more than fifty years since that day, I have unaccountably forgotten what he said. My sneaking off to watch

the boys shooting off firecrackers took my attention from the speech. The prodigal behavior of one town boy who set off a whole bunch of crackers at once impressed me with the fact that I was in a new world, where a nickel meant much less than out on the farm. I must therefore fail to pass as a reporter of the address. I know that Mr. Clarkson's position was a hard one, and I never heard much of him again in politics; but he was for many years the Father Clarkson of the *Register* who did a good work in the advocacy of better farming methods.

Mr. Kerr was a good lawyer and an excellent citizen. I suppose I saw him many times after that; but I remember only one meeting, when I saw him in Des Moines, something more than thirty years after the event of the banners. It was in the free-silver period. I was at a state Democratic convention. I was introduced to a man with a luxuriant mop of gray hair which one could see had once been red.

"Shake hands with Mr. Kerr of the Grundy delegation," said the man introducing us.

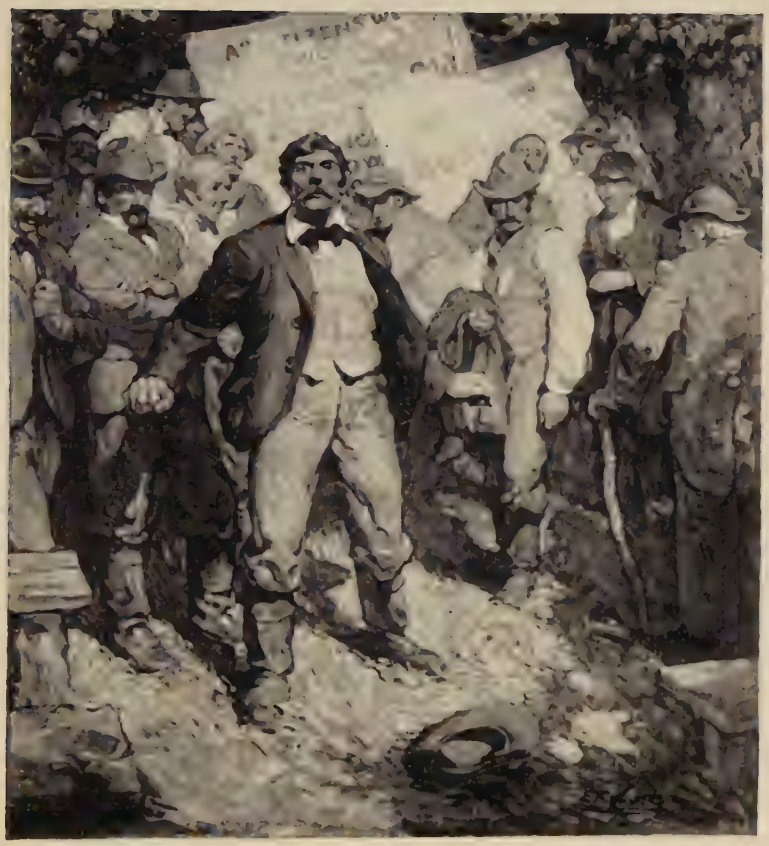
It was Daniel Kerr, our old supporter of Governor Clarkson. He had left the G. O. P. I could scarcely believe it. He was the last man of all those whose names were so familiar to me in my boyhood whom I should have thought capable of being lured off the reservation by the false light of sixteen-to-one.

The great Republican outsider of our county was Judge Elias Marble, whose name I have celebrated in recounting his killing of a dozen wild geese in one day. Marble was the bitter enemy of Clarkson, and had bitterly condemned Daniel Kerr's devotion to him. And yet while the Clarksons were still so powerful

in state politics, here was our old and respected friend in the camp of the Boy Orator of the Platte! As I shook his hand that day in Des Moines, I recalled the day in Hickory Grove at the Grange celebration when I saw him rise to declare for the banishment of Aleck Relyea's banner—rise until he could see that he was as lone as the ancient mariner, and then sink back on the hard plank bench. It takes a long time really to know a man.

The Anti-Monopoly Party, the first phase of our political revolt, came with the depression which reached its crisis in the panic of 1873, and bore down crushingly on all America for years. With us it was made worse by the failure of the wheat crop and the concomitant failure of the railways to give us transportation charges which we could pay on our heavy freight without great distress. The Anti-Monopolists put up a ticket in our county for a campaign or so and elected some county officers. And when the farmers began to make platforms they inevitably felt that they had to grapple with the currency question.

As for me, any one who thinks that because I did not know how to break a five-dollar bill I was ignorant of the money question is greatly mistaken. I was a financial expert. There was then a journalistic skyrocket in the West named Pomeroy, who published and edited a paper called *Pomeroy's Democrat,* which gave me my command of the currency question—that and a cheap weekly in Chicago edited by one S. F. Norton—but Brick Pomeroy was my guide, philosopher and friend. He was a fiatist. He made it perfectly clear that when the Government made a bit of paper money a "legal tender for all



Painted by E. F. Ward

THE GRANGE PICNIC

debts, public and private," it was good, no matter how much of it was issued. It could not depreciate.

If any one called attention to the fact that our greenbacks had depreciated, Brick Pomeroy said of course they had. The "money power" had caused the greenbacks to be "stabbed in the back" by the statement printed upon the aforesaid back, that the money was not legal tender "for duties on imports and interest on the public debts." Of course such money would depreciate, said Brick; but the first issue of the war, which was a full legal tender for all debts—did they ever depreciate? Never!

Some of the sound-money men used to find references to the French assignat and its depreciation. They pestiferously harped on the assignat and our old continental currency; but they never got very far then with me. I was the boy marvel of the neighborhood. I wonder how such men as William Doak, our local Republican leader, and as good a neighbor as ever was, could have been so patient with my fulminations. But such arguments as I have alluded to swept the country like a prairie fire. The Greenback Party was formed; and two years after Governor Clarkson's ineffectual stand against the banners at Hickory Grove, his fears were justified by the political developments which made Peter Cooper a candidate of the Greenback Party for the presidency. Our family had shied from the Grange, and so far as I remember, took no interest in the anti-monopoly agitation; but we were supporters of Peter Cooper.

I think that even in my boy's mind I was conscious of the area of uncertainty occupied by the assignats and the continental bills, for I kept studying the cur-

rency question for years. By the time the sixteen-to-one agitation was in full swing, I had come to the conclusion that though most of their arguments had been bad, the sound-money men had been correct in their position. The gold standard was, in my opinion, as good as any, and there was an advantage in avoiding the change to silver. I was sure that a bimetallic standard was a logical and monetary absurdity. So I was a sound-money Democrat, and was a member of a revolting and contesting delegation to the Democratic State Convention one year—the year, I think, when Daniel Kerr was a delegate.

I finally supported Bryan, prefacing my speeches with an explanation of my opposition to sixteen-to-one, but justifying my vote as a choice of evils. I have thus gradually modified my views on the money question, until I have adopted the composite gold standard theory of Professor Irving Fisher. I believe Fisher is right. Anyhow, I have in some fifty years succeeded in improving the economic company I keep. I have shaken Brick Pomeroy and enlisted with the distinguished professor of economics of Yale University. Please give me credit for that.

I do not see how the Greenbackers can be logically condemned as lacking in intelligence. In all our history the United States had never had a currency system which had not been very bad indeed. The Greenbackers were no worse than had been their lawmakers for a century. Moreover the system established at the end of their fight for fiat money was the one which we have just now condemned and thrown aside. They had had no education in sound money, and were forced to choose between the very

faulty old national-bank system with currency based on government bonds, and one in which the bonds would have been converted directly into a circulating medium. They wanted a currency consisting of bills which were evidences of the government's debt, instead of one in which similar bills were based on interest-bearing bonds held by banks issuing the bills. If they made a wrong choice, is it any wonder? There were two ditches into which to fall, and the blind were leading the blind; so we fell into the ditch on the left instead of right.

Back of all the currency theories which we ignorantly discussed there lay a deeper and more significant fact. We had been for a decade and a half at least doing business with a depreciated currency. During that time we had been obliged, or inclined, or both, to go deeply into debt. The return to the gold standard meant a deflation which could not fail to make it from once and a half to three times as hard to pay off those debts as it would have been if the inflation had continued. Creditors knew this.

Debtors sort of felt it without knowing it, and their feeling was justified. Eight-cent eggs, ten-cent butter, corn so low that it was cheaper fuel than coal, and wheat down to forty-five cents a bushel—merely expressed in figures the lessened purchasing power of products after the deflation. There were other factors entering into the equation; but the currency factor is obvious.

Traditionally, farmers have always swung in opinion toward cheaper money when caught in any such economic trap. They have not become articulate in the demand for a change in the standard since the

World War, but they have complained bitterly of the deflation brought about by the Federal Reserve System in 1920.

Really when one contemplates the present situation of the farmers of Europe it speaks well for the self-control of our farmers that they have not raised another greenback question here. When we were preparing for the Federal Farm Loan System we studied carefully the German Landschaften. The German farmers were mortgaged in many cases up to eighty per cent. or more of the value of their farms. All these debts have now passed away. Their farms are said to be almost mortgage-free. There came a time when with their depreciated currency a farmer could sell a quarter of beef and pay off his debt. The French farmers are paying off their mortgages with the depreciated francs. So it has been wherever the money has depreciated. Depreciated money amounts to a partial or complete act of bankruptcy for debtors, and the farmers were in debt. It has been starvation for the creditors and those living on fixed salaries and investments; but all observers speak of the universal prosperity of the farmers in France, Germany and the other countries with depreciated currency. Their debts are gone, and what they produce is things. Things will always demand their value in any money.

I have seen the same phenomenon with depreciated rubles in Siberia. I had a friend who had been what amounts to an assistant attorney general in Petrograd in the czar's government, who was almost literally starving on the stipend earned by him in the government in the Far Eastern Republic in Vladivostok; while of the peasants who grew grain

and cattle and wool, many of them were debt-free for the first time in their history, and getting rubles by the million for their produce.

In fact, beginning with the great outflow of gold from America in the age of Cortez and Pizarro, the gradually increasing economic freedom from age to age has in large part come from the constant inflation of the quantity of the money metals. For we might have enormous inflation with the single gold standard, if science could only discover how to convert other metals into gold—now no longer considered impossible—or if new discoveries or new methods should make gold more plentiful as they have done so many times since 1492.

It is to provide against such things as this and against the fluctuations of gold in value that Professor Fisher has developed his composite gold standard. The agency, whatever it may be, which can play with the purchasing power of our money has the welfare of our people under control. We were wrong in our greenback theory in the 'seventies, but the opposite wrong is equally destructive of prosperity. Inflation and deflation are evils of equal magnitude. We suffer from one or the other most of the time. Theoretically, it is possible to do away with both; and whatever is possible in such theory ought some day to be brought within the field of the practicable. Then such scenes as that in Hickory Grove would not occur.

CHAPTER XXII

I LOSE SOME OF MY INNOCENCE

By the time I was twelve or fourteen years of age I began to feel that I must find some way out of the intellectual dark tower in which I was confined. To be sure, my friends Lincoln, Franklin, Elihu Burritt—who remembers him now—and some others were self-educated; but so many of my heroes knew Greek, Latin and the higher mathematics; so many of them had passed through that strange life which people led in schools, that I imbibed the idea that I should have it too. And my little excursions into natural philosophy, botany and other regions on the frontiers of learning led me to think that the exploration of these realms was my real vocation. And how I yearned to be somebody!

But the exit from the dark tower was hidden. To go to school, except in the little country schoolhouse across the slough, took money; and we had none. Some one seemed to be waiting beforehand for every cent which dribbled into the family till. We were a family prone to illnesses. Physicians lived in towns remote and their bills were only a little less fearful than death—underpaid as they were. No family was ever more industrious; and what with cows and other live stock and poultry, we gradually attained a little better system of farming; but our surplus always

went for debt. My mother favored selling out and moving to a college town, where she said she could have done something to help and father could have found some sort of work to support us while the children went to school; but father could not see himself making a living in town. It was something new, and his nature turned instinctively to the known. The way out for me seemed non-existent.

The summer before I was sixteen, however, I heard that our county superintendent of schools, Mr. W. S. Larmon, would hold at Grundy Center a new sort of school called a teachers' institute. All the teachers in the county, all who wished to be teachers and any others who chose were invited to attend. It cost only a dollar to enroll, and there would be a corps of instructors; great people, learned people, who would teach us things—I had no idea what. I had really mastered the curriculum of our school. There was traditionally nothing in our society for a boy who was so good a scholar but to become a county teacher. Hence there seemed a sound economic reason for my attending this institute; so I might go, it was decided. And thus I suddenly found myself out in the great world.

The transition from the life in Colfax Township to the little village of Grundy Center, the plunge into the classes meeting for lectures in that old wooden schoolhouse, was the most astounding leap of my whole life. I found myself a member of a body of young people who seemed to me to have been marvelously favored by fortune. They were all so well-dressed, so much like the young people in my romances, so self-possessed, so able to flirt with one

another in the light of open day, walking brazenly along the streets, girls and boys together without the slightest look of consciousness! It was a new world.

I doubt if I had white shirts to wear. I had paper collars, though, which came in boxes costing twenty-five cents a box and were thrown away when sufficiently soiled; but no cuffs. There was nothing obscene about the human wrist. This was fine for me, I showed so much of it. My cravats were bows which fastened to my collar button with rubber loops. My suit was bought ready-made, as a matter of course, at the village store; and must have been far too short, for I was six feet tall and weighed about one hundred and fifty pounds. My shoes were the newest new that I had, and were blacked by myself.

I had not yet overcome the maiden modesty which forbade me to shave; and my face was downy along the jowls and on the upper lip, with a beard almost as heavy as that of one or two of the elderly spinsters in the A Class at the institute; but mine was a nice yellow down like that of the gosling, and the skin under it was quite as fair as any girl's. My hair, however, was my humiliation. My brother had cut it for me the Sunday before the beginning of the institute; and I had gone out into my great world ignorant of the fact that what with a dull pair of shears and what with a basic departure of his barber's ideals from those prevailing in the county-seat, he had sent me forth as marked a man as though he had branded me with a hot iron, or as if I had been a Nazarite from birth with never a hair-cut to my name.

Among the boys attending the institute was a chap named Herbert Bigelow—he is in the mercantile

business now, out in California, where all the good Hawkeyes go, and within the past year I have had a letter from him—who made my hair-cut a matter of comment for the amusement of himself and others, and of misery, heartburnings and torture to me.

"I guess," said he, speaking to a group of boys, "that the rats must have gnawed it off." And then, when I refused to recognize the application, he added, "You'll have to have it cut now, won't you?"

But as a matter of fact, such a stratagem as having it cut never occurred to me. To have done so would have been a weakening in the face of criticism. I tossed my ragged locks from my forehead, pursued the even tenor of my way and never told my grief, but suffered. I did—I really suffered.

There were about one hundred of us at the institute, which continued six weeks. We were divided into three classes. The A Class was composed of teachers holding first-grade certificates. Those with second-grade certificates went into the B Class, and there was a C class for those with no previous experience as teachers. We had no third-grade certificates in those days. I should be sorry for the educational system which allowed any grade lower than most of our second-grade teachers. I went into the C Class; where, in the atmosphere of intense intellectuality, I soon forgot about my hair and Herbert Bigelow's caustic remarks upon it.

Superintendent Larmon was a farmer and had the good sense not to conduct his own institute. He was afflicted with a selective deafness which enabled him, in his political meetings as a candidate of the Anti-Monopoly Party, to hear whatever he wished to hear

and to be deaf to all else. When the Anti-Monopoly agitation was new, Mr. Larmon was opposed to it. After seeing the light, he left the Republican Party and addressed Anti-Monopoly meetings. At one of these he made a name for himself through that selective deafness of his. After his address, he expressed a willingness to answer questions. An opponent in the audience asked him something like this:

"Did you, or did you not, last year say that the Anti-Monopoly Party is composed of disappointed office-seekers and irresponsible agitators, and that every patriot ought to remain loyal to the party that saved the Union? And if that was so then, isn't it so now?"

"I didn't quite get that," said Mr. Larmon, leaning forward with his hand back of his ear. "Will the gentleman kindly repeat it?"

The question was repeated. Still Mr. Larmon couldn't quite get it. The questioner came close to the platform and shouted it. Mr. Larmon nodded his head and smiled. Clearly he now got it, and was about to answer. His hearers strained forward in anticipation.

"I was born," said Mr. Larmon, smiling benignly on his red-faced interrogator, "in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. And now are there any other questions?"

After that, any one among us who answered a question by saying that he was born in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, was held to be within his rights as an evader.

In Class C, I was soon, all unknown to myself, a source of great annoyance to my instructors. There

were about half a dozen of us who pursued a policy which tended to turn the class into a debating school. At every opportunity we started debates on points involved in every one of the common branches of study. It was a new and delightful experience to me to rise to my feet with questions, to have them answered by Herbert Bigelow or some one else in the room, and to hold my own in my reply. I was like a racing colt just from the pasture out for the first time in trial heats on the track. I forgot all about my hair, and I believe I made the others forget it too.

There was one girl who looked at me so admiringly that I was disgusted. I was disgusted because she was not the girl for whom I was fighting. The wonderful creature who governed the beating of my heart was a placid plump lass of fourteen or so, the daughter of a family long prominent in the county. She had great black eyes, while mine were blue. Her hair and brows were black and her complexion was of the purest olive. I was her slave—or would have been if she had only indicated that she was willing to have me serve her. She was the queen of my dreams by day and by night. It was the most severe attack I had ever suffered. She never looked at me. I might in the most triumphant manner prove my position as to the correct mode of diagramming a sentence; but Lizzie—that was her name—never gave the slightest sign that she was interested, while that homely girl with the pimply face smiled at me from her seat over in the next row. Alas, how easily things go wrong!

I had not yet plumbed the nethermost depths of despair, when the word was given out at general assembly that I, with two or more other debaters, was

promoted to Class B; where I had scarcely had time to feel at home and free to enlighten the class on various things, when two of us were lifted bodily into the rare atmosphere of the A Class, among the first-grade teachers, and right under the eye of Professor S. D. Gaylord, the conductor of the institute. It took me a long time to fathom the mystery of my elevation. The fact is, however, that in the irrepressible ebullience of our youthful conceit we were a source of annoyance to the instructors in the lower classes, and Professor Gaylord had us brought into his own class, where he could sit on us whenever necessary, and where there were young women and men able to assist in the operation. As for me, I was very happy in the A Class, notwithstanding the fact that Lizzie was lost to me—if one may be said to have lost what he never had.

In Professor Gaylord I had an instructor who, it still seems to me, after a lifetime of more or less intimate acquaintance with teachers, was a wonderful one. He was from New England; Boston, I believe. I have never seen him or heard of him since he left Grundy Center, where he was principal of the village schools. He did far more for me than may seem possible when it is considered that I was under him for a total of not more than two or three months, when I was nearing sixteen, and the following autumn. We saw no more of him after Mr. Larmon ceased to be our county superintendent. He was a man of something like sixty, with gray hair, a florid face and a manner of exquisite courtesy. To hear him speak was an education for me. He may have been a very ordinary specimen of teacher, but I believe he was

something superior. He dominated that gathering of the best teachers in the county, reenforced by a group from adjoining counties, by the force of his personality, his judgment and his learning.

We also had an instructor named Tyndale Palmer, who gave one or two elocutionary entertainments. He was a hearty, energetic, attractive young man who could almost make it necessary to send out a flood alarm after he had rendered *The Death of Poor Little Joe.* He did more for me than any of the instructors except only Professor Gaylord.

The A Class too did me a great deal of good. I was now one of a group of the most intelligent people in the county; for school-teaching was then a calling in which most of the energetic, thinking, developing personalities engaged—for a while at least. The teacher then stood in this respect far higher than now. All my classmates were years older than I. Many of them were college people. One was a Dartmouth man. His full beard and gold-rimmed eye-glasses hanging by their cord gave him a look so scholarly and distinguished that I was uplifted when he deigned to talk with me as a fellow human being. I was shocked when I discovered at the next institute that he had failed as a teacher, while I had scored a success, so far at least as having been able to secure the same school again.

I wonder what ever became of John Addington, Tom Fitzgerald and August Neumann, who came over from Ackley. They easily stood at the head of the men in the class, in my opinion at least—big men, men of the world, it seemed to me. John Driscoll was more like me—an active young representative of the Irish. He is the only one of the Ackley crowd I

have ever met since; and I ran into him as he stood, sore-footed and hoarse, among the ineffectual demonstrators for Governor Johnson of Minnesota in the Democratic National Convention at Denver.

I took the examination at the close of this six weeks of emergence into the great world; and though I was not yet sixteen, I was given a certificate. Then I went out to apply for a school, as we called it. The certificated teacher went forth like a man looking for a job in the harvest field, until he found a school director willing to give him a trial. My victim was a German over in the northwest part of Shiloh Township. His name was John Mennenga. I rode in my search for a location on one of our farm horses, and was directed to a farm-house some two or three miles northwest of where the town of Wellsburg now stands. Nothing was there then but the great house, barns and yards of George Wells, whose great estate was always in my mind as I created the environment of J. Buckner Gowdy in my Iowa trilogy. I was not, however, in the character of Buckner Gowdy, creating in the least that of Mr. George Wells.

A farmer pulled out into the road with a load of wheat as I approached the home of my director. I halted the driver to inquire as to where I could find Mr. Mennenga.

"Dot's me," said he.

"Have you a teacher for your school for the winter term?" I asked.

"No," he replied.

"I came to apply for the school," said I quaveringly. "My name is Quick. I live over in Colfax Township. I'd like to teach your school this winter."

Herbert Quick, about 1877.

Herbert Quick, about 1887.

"You ain't very oldt yet," said he.

"No," said I; "but I've a pretty good percentage in my certificate."

He looked at the certificate, showing very little indication of understanding it.

"Vell," said he, "I guess you'll do." And as soon as I had signed the written contract which he produced, the deed was done. A man would have given the matter of choosing a wife scarcely less thought.

My salary was twenty-five dollars a month. Every child in the school was German; and no English was spoken on the playground or in the school, except in class or in remarks addressed to me. I suppose that German is the language of every-day life in that neighborhood still; but even then, children ten years old and over could read English with a fair degree of understanding; and the fact that the activities of the county, the township and the school district had to be carried on in English was slowly giving, even to the people who had come from Germany as adults, a smattering of our language; and these same factors were making them over into Americans. The process, however, was much more rapid and effectual along the edge of the German zone in localities like that of my father's farm. There the neighbors of the old stock Americanized our German friends.

I had now, all unassisted so far as advice was concerned, laid out my course for a while at least. I would teach both summer and winter, and thus have more time for study than I could have if I made a hand on the farm and taught only in the winter. My

wages as a teacher would enable my father to hire such help as he needed in the early summer, and my summer terms always ended so that I could work at home in haying and harvest, and thereafter until most of the fall's work was done, except for a portion of the corn husking and the time when I should be at the teachers' institute. I had no idea that my wages belonged to me or that there was anything unjust in my turning them over to my father after my small personal needs were taken care of. Neither did he; nor was there.

I determined to get a school nearer home so that I could save my board, which was two dollars and a half a week—a huge expense. But I must say that the good German woman who cooked for me that first winter gave me a regimen such as I might have had in a well-to-do household in Hanover or Oldenburg, and caused me to revise our general verdict that the Germans were not over-clean. She gave me delicious food and plenty of it. Yet two dollars and a half a week meant two-fifths of my stipend. So I went four miles from home to the director of a school in our township and induced Mr. Schaefer, another German director, to hire me for the summer. I boarded at home and walked four miles each way every day. I did this while teaching this school, and for several terms I taught an equal distance away, over at the German church north of the present village of Holland.

Rain or shine, calm or blizzard, I was always at my school at eight o'clock in the morning so as to have the room swept out and a warm fire in the stove in winter when the pupils arrived. For, of course, we

had no janitor service. When I began this, a young lack-beard of sixteen, I was to all appearance not a very good physical risk. After four years of walking eight miles a day in all weathers, I had attained a ruggedness which lasted me most of my life. I believe that I have owed much of my ability to work to this period of rather easy labors coupled with enforced pedestrianism.

At the second institute I passed so good an examination that I was given a first-grade certificate and was no longer in the A Class merely by virtue of Professor Gaylord's decree. I had risen in the world, and had much secret satisfaction in it. Some of the boys who were so much my superior in everything that made for standing in our little world, failed and had to take second grade. Harry Gaylord, the professor's son, looked hurt when he found that I had got first grade, and he only second. I did not exult—that is, not openly; but there was no mistaking the fact that I had risen in the world. I have never won any place which has given me more pleasure; and besides, I was now entitled to five dollars a month higher wages. That would cover my clothes for the year. It might mean going to college.

I have often wondered what the others in those gatherings thought of me. I was the prize greenhorn, the typical yokel of the institutes—at first, anyhow—of that I am sure. I was always in love with some girl; and though I usually concealed the fact, on one occasion at least the others found me out. They did not discover my passion for Emma—and neither did she. She had a sweetheart whose addresses were frowned upon by her family, and she used to give me

letters for him. I delivered them with a mixture of devotion to her and hatred for him which almost turned my head.

Ella, her successor, was a town girl who was the loveliest of the lovely. She was the favorite pupil of a town principal who did me the honor of according me his friendship, and as a pledge of this went somewhat out of his way to bring Ella and me together. I think he was trying an experiment. He wanted to see what I would do. I experienced a susceptibility to hot waves and fits of various sorts, and to functional paralysis of the nerves controlling the organs of speech. Yet in some way I made a date with Ella to take her to a social gathering at the house of Professor Gaylord.

Now Ella, in spite of her youth, was far from inexperienced—I can see that now. She was a little creature whom no one could have wished decreased in size, unless it might have been herself. She was inclined to be a flirt, and gave me such encouragement to approach her as was proper and within the rules. But, save in my theories, I could not. She was my lady fair, and I was her knight. She was a princess, and I her champion.

I wonder whether or not in these days of petting parties, and the problem of the conduct of our boys and girls, any of them will understand what I am about to write. I'll chance it, anyhow. There is in the idealistic boy a modesty, a shrinking from the passage of the barriers between the sexes, which is greater than the aloofness of the most modest girl; for he has an instinctive conception, which she lacks, of the relations to which those contacts lead. I pos-

sessed this boyish backwardness—or it possessed me. I could not make the slightest advance in the way of a caress—not even of the remotest sort; but when I was away from Ella I was in torment. On the evening of the sociable, I walked the floor of my boarding-house, waiting for the time I dreaded; and finally, as it turned out, I could not wait. I went to her, and we found ourselves intruding on the family so soon after their evening meal that it aroused comment. In fact when the institute closed with what we used to call a literary evening, a poem was read in which this unseemly haste for which I was to blame was made the subject of some good-natured banter.

I have never seen Ella since that last evening. I know that I was a source of disappointment to her. If she reads this, and remembers, I beg her forgiveness. I wish to assure her that if our meeting had been deferred a few years I should not have been found so entirely lacking in means of showing her how very, very greatly she attracted me. For I was deeply smitten.

By the time that my friend, Professor Gaylord, went out of our little educational circle, I was much better dressed. I wore what our village clothier called a real tony suit. Moreover I had a boughten hair-cut and shaved regularly every Sunday. I had risen to familiarity with those on the higher levels, though still fundamentally an outsider. The Anti-Monopoly wave receded and the Republicans came back into power, as seems to be their habit. Superintendent Larmon went back to his farm and a gentleman named George T. Cowgill from the southern part of the county was elected in his place. I went to my third

institute, took the examinations, as we had to do annually then, and was granted another first-grade certificate, which I think I still have. There is on this document a record, as on all such papers, of the percentages of the questions successfully answered. My average was something above ninety-nine per cent. On most of the branches I was given a perfect score. This, coupled with the fact that I had been engaged to continue in the school where my work was known, seemed to indicate that my position as a teacher was secure; and I began looking forward to something better.

And just when the world looked so rosy, I came home one day only to have my mother hand me a letter from Superintendent Cowgill which threw my little universe into chaos. He asked her how old I was, thinking, I have no doubt, that she might remember the occasion of my birth.

The superintendent was in a position of some difficulty, as he took pains to explain in this letter. We had a state superintendent of public instruction named C. W. von Coelln, who had sent out instructions to the county superintendents to refuse certificates to boys under nineteen and to girls of an age somewhat less—I forget what. He was Prussianizing our school system by this attack on our Lancastrian system of setting children to teach children. Now Superintendent Larmon, either because he did not feel the state superintendent's instructions were binding on him, or because of that selective deafness of his, ignored these mandates from Des Moines. He had taken Professor Gaylord's advice as to my case and allowed me to teach. But Mr. Cowgill felt that

he ought to follow the Von Coelln instructions. So he refused a certificate to a fine young farmer boy under nineteen over in Lincoln Township and had been accused by the rejected candidate of partiality.

"There's Herb Quick," I can hear him saying. "He isn't nineteen, and he's been teaching for two years. What about that, Mr. Cowgill?"

Now I had never heard of this infernal Von Coelln rule in my life. I had not misrepresented my age to Superintendent Cowgill. I suspect that inquiries as to the ages of first-grade teachers were left out of the examinations out of consideration for the feelings of the ladies of the A Class. I am sure that I had not lied to Cowgill about my age, or I should recall it. I usually retain such things in my memory. Be that as it may, he found it advisable to write my mother about my age. He explained that he had made it a rule to follow the instructions of the state superintendent in such matters and told her what the rule was as to the ages of male teachers.

"Now," he added, "in order to clear my skirts of any charge of partiality, I should like to have a statement from you as to the age of your son Herbert Quick."

I noted that expression "to clear my skirts." What he wanted was a record on which to stand. And yet how could we make him a record which would allow me to go on with my school work, and to earn that money which might give me a college education? For I was not yet eighteen, and a year at that age seems an eternity. Mother laid the letter aside and I went outdoors without any discussion. As I went toward the stable, I remembered that the Japanese,

and I believe some other peoples, very properly count the day of one's birth as a birthday, and therefore reckon that when one attains the age of a year he celebrates his second birthday. I went back to my mother.

"When a person is born," I asked, "isn't it a birthday? The Japanese, and many other folks say that it is. And how can it be denied that on the twenty-third day of October, 1861, I was born?"

"Why, of course, you were!" said she. "I guess I remember it!"

"Well then," I argued, "according to the reckoning of most of the people of the world, if we count the Chinese and Japanese and Hindus, my second birthday took place on October 23, 1862. And it's the only sensible way of counting. Any other way is wrong, isn't it?"

"It would kind of seem so," said my mother.

"Then," said I, "instead of telling Mr. Cowgill my age, tell him about my birthday, and let him reckon it up himself. I'll write a letter for you to sign."

"I'll see," said she, "when you have finished the letter."

The letter read:

"I have your letter asking about the age of my son. His nineteenth birthday will come on the 23rd of October of this year."

Only that and nothing more. If Mr. Cowgill made the error of not calling the day of my birth a birthday, why we were not to blame. He did this, evidently, for we heard no more from this office and I went on with my work. We had done as Mr. Cowgill asked—given

him a chance to clear his skirts. I felt that I had a vested interest in the opportunity to teach which the superintendent's office had given me. He had, in addition, saved the school district from losing a teacher who was giving satisfaction and of going to the trouble and taking the risk of trying out another. One can easily find such excuses.

I have never had time to work out the basic right and wrong of this act; but whatever of guilt there may have been in it was mine; for I am sure my logic, casuistical as it may have been, was convincing to my mother. There was, no doubt, something equivalent to a mental reservation in my answer to Mr. Cowgill's letter. But I did give him an opportunity to demand a more exact answer if he desired it.

The mental reservation is a dangerous thing—I admit that, but was not one of the Fathers of the Church sainted, in spite of the fact that he had once used it? A Christian fleeing from assassination had taken refuge in his cell. When the would-be murderers, hurrying in pursuit, found the saint standing before the door of the cell, they asked if the refugee had passed.

"He did not pass this way," said the saint, at the same time passing his right hand up his left sleeve.

The murderers went on and the refugee was saved. He had not passed that way—that is, up the saint's sleeve. The saint had used a mental reservation coupled with his exalted reputation for truthfulness to save the life of an innocent man. Was not this a holy act? Of course the cases are scarcely parallel. But what I told the county superintendent was as a matter of fact literally true. It was my nineteenth birthday.

Then there is the doctrine of probabilism which enters into my choice of a course of action. Mr. Cowgill had demanded action. What did he desire? Did he want to throw me out of my school? If so why did he stress the fact that all he wished to do was to clear his skirts? Now his desire was, after a manner of speaking, the law to us. Under the doctrine of probabilism, when the law is uncertain as having two probable meanings, one is lawfully free to follow the course which favors one's inclinations. This is exactly what I did with Mr. Cowgill's demand; and I really saved him from an embarrassment. I quote as justifying my probabilistic defense, (until he objects to it, at least), that very eminent writer of the Church of England, Reverend Richard Frederick Littledale, with whose excellent writings I assume all my readers to be familiar.

Perhaps the episode, in an autobiography, is of most value—beyond the proof it should give that I am trying to tell the truth—as an evidence of the extent to which at the age of eighteen the bloom had been lost from the peach of my innocence. It was really a rather ingenious stratagem, was it not? And the fact that I had pulled off a rather neat trick gave me a world of pleasure.

CHAPTER XXIII

I ATTACK WEST POINT

At seventeen, I had for months imagined myself as about to enroll in some college. I was now able to earn enough money to pay my way. There was a college at Grinnell and another at Mount Vernon, both within seventy-five or eighty miles of home, and easily reached. I should become a learned and a great man! The plan was a perfectly good one—all but the greatness, anyhow—and when I remarked to my family that I guessed I would go next term, my heart beat fast at the importance of the statement. My father's answer was heavily charged with fate. He said he didn't see how we could afford it.

"I'll have to have the money," said he; and my spirits fell.

Yet I made no remonstrance, for the money belonged to him if he demanded it; and I knew of the doctor's bills and expenses for hired help and the deficits on the returns of the farm. Heavily charged with fate I say, because if I had ever reached Grinnell or Mount Vernon I should have tasted of a feast from which no force could ever have weaned me. My life would have been a different one. I should in all probability have become a college professor. I have never been able to answer in my own mind the question as to whether or not this would have been a good thing for

me; but when I think of the inferiority in the matter of learning to which it condemned me, I have never been able to think of it without regret—even as I write I think of it with regret. It seemed then as if I had met defeat; but I refused to accept it as permanent, so I began planning a new campaign.

I had never for any length of time thought of my career as anything but that of a writer. I had the usual dropping into poetry, the deviations into painting and sculpture, and the temptations into politics which are prone to beset the careers of genius; but in my dreams, writing was my vocation. Well, it seemed as if fate were against me in getting a college training, the essential equipment for writing. I determined, however, to challenge fate with another plan.

I had read Albert D. Richardson's *The Field, the Dungeon and the Escape,* which was a vivid account of the adventures of a war correspondent in the Civil War and his tragic death. He had never gone to college; he too had been a schoolmaster, and he had made a great name for himself. At about this time the fame of Archibald Forbes reached Colfax Township. I had never read any of his works, but I learned that he also was a romantic figure, with his news stories of the siege of Paris, the Servian and Russo-Turkish Wars and the whole magic East. He had pierced the shield of the world, as had Richardson, with the spear of the war correspondent. And think of their adventures! To dare, to penetrate unknown realms, to see strange lands and to write of brave deeds and the secret wonders of the earth for a whole world to read! What a wonderful life! I laid my plans for becoming a war correspondent.

I had heard of the Military Academy at West Point, and secretly I sent for information as to the course of study there. I found that the curriculum was strong in modern languages. That would be fine for a new Forbes or Richardson. The admission called then for proficiency in the common branches only, in which I had a first-grade certificate showing me to be one hundred per cent. American. I would go to West Point. I would specialize in modern languages so as to make travel and communication in foreign lands easier. I would not serve in the army after graduation, but would resign my commission and become a war correspondent like Albert D. Richardson and Archibald Forbes. I, too, would see and do strange things.

> On shore, and when
> Thro' scudding drifts the rainy Hyades
> Vext the dim sea.

I would become a name forever roaming with a hungry heart. Much would I see and know—

> Cities of men
> And manners, climates, councils, governments;
> Myself not least, but honored of them all.

I had taken fire again after my father's dash of cold water. I wrote our congressman, Nathaniel C. Deering, who lived up in Osage, and was informed that an examination would be held very soon for selecting an appointee from our district. In my verdancy I did not realize what a new thing it then was for a congressman to dispose of the appointment

through a competitive examination; and so green was I that after I was told of this innovation, I never suspected that in all probability he was using the examination as a means of getting rid of obnoxious aspirants, and would at least probably use the place as a plum for some influential supporter, just as of old. I was very happy. I felt quite assured that I could land this appointment. Had I ever met any boy of my age who could win over me in an examination in the common branches? Never!

I told my mother so much of my plan as involved going to West Point for an education, and she went pale. Of course, she must have thought I would win in the examination. Nobody could beat her boy! Trust her to have faith in me! I should become an officer in the army. I should be killed in battle; and when I showed the unlikelihood of this, she asserted that I should be sent to far places with my command and she should never see me again. For all that, she would not stand in the way of my career. I might go to Mason City and take the examination.

It was my first trip by rail, that ride from Steamboat Rock to Mason City. This was in itself something memorable, for the iron horse, and the swift passage over the landscape at twenty to twenty-five miles an hour, had something epical in it. Such great names as Ackley, Hampton, Mason City became things to talk of afterward. Finding the place of the examination was an adventure too; but the gathering of the young men who were candidates was on a smaller scale, like the teachers' examinations to which I had become accustomed, and I breathed easier.

First came the physical examination, for we were

Steamboat Rock.

seeking admission into the army. I had had no doubt, somehow, that I should pass physically. To be sure, I was not much good at wrestling or running or lifting; but I was in excellent health, was six feet tall and did as much work on the farm as any one. When the son of Judge Ruddick and I stripped for the examination, Doctor C. H. Smith, of Mason City, one of the examiners, and afterward our family physician, made some joke about our making good marks for the enemy to shoot at.

It did not take the doctors long, when they looked me over, to sign the death warrant of my hopes of being the great chronicler of future wars. With a sinking heart, I heard them say something about "unsymmetrical chest," and a few moments after there went into the record the fact that I had malformed feet and ankylosed ankles.

"You won't need to return for the mental examination," they said, after I had donned my clothes.

"I won't? Why not?" I asked.

I thought for the moment that perhaps I had so favorably impressed them that I was to be appointed without any further test. Surely I was not to be thus summarily rejected!

"You don't pass physically," said Doctor Smith. "You're rejected."

I don't believe I showed the shock I felt. I walked along the street in a sort of daze; and I remember I stopped on a crossing and forced a drayman to halt his load while he remarked, "Young man, the world don't turn around only once in twenty-four hours; but it's turning, and I want to deliver this load before it gets clear around!"

I looked at him so hard that I always knew him afterward—Old Man Briggs the Drayman. I got out of his way, made my way back to my sister's home, where I was staying, and eventually back to the farm. My mother was relieved; but I was lost for a while. I was not to go to college. I was not to go to West Point, where I should have received a salary while I studied, which I had fondly believed, would have enabled me to help the folks and earn my education.

If I had gone to West Point, I should in all probability never have resigned my commission. My sense of duty would have prevented that. Therefore my boyhood dream was based on an illusion. But with proper allowance for my point of view, I have always thought that the project of thus obtaining a military education and a mastery of some modern languages as a preparation for the life of a war correspondent was a rather good one for me to have worked out.

I should, no doubt, have been well up toward the head of my class. Therefore they would have made an engineer of me. I should have spent my life building lighthouses and fortifications, and spending on waterway projects, appropriations of the people's money made to help reelect senators and congressmen. By this time I should have been retired and living at some club, satisfied if my stroke had not so far left me as to eliminate me from the billiard tournament.

And of all this I was robbed by that infernal infantile paralysis which made my chest unsymmetrical, stiffened my ankles and changed the form of my feet. Again, I have never been able to decide as to whether the influence of this disappointment was one of blessing or of blight.

CHAPTER XXIV

DROPPING INTO POETRY

On this farm where we helped write the saga of the wheat, I lived from 1869 until 1881. I grew up here from a child of eight to a young lack-beard of nineteen. The thoughts of youth have been described as long, long thoughts; and the years of youth are long, long years. This dozen years in retrospect seems to me twice as long as any other equal expanse of time in all my life. I can scarcely realize, as I look back upon it, that I lived much longer in Sioux City than on what we called the Crippen Place in Grundy County.

Save for my futile campaign for the capture of West Point, I never left that immediate neighborhood until I was approaching twenty; except for one journey by wagon with my brother Charles away out across Hamilton and Webster Counties, past Mud Lake—now under cultivation—and back by another route. I returned from this voyage very much broadened—I thought—bringing visions of the pond-hole country, marshes, muskrat houses, coal mines, metropolises like Fort Dodge, Webster City and Iowa Falls, a lock of the hair of a mature young lady with whom I had read Owen Meredith's *Lucile,* and the open contempt of Charley for falling into such an affair. But

she was the first who ever read love poetry—if *Lucile* may be called poetry—with me.

For the winter of 1880-1881 I went down in the southern part of the county near Beaman, teaching, for they paid the extravagant salary of forty dollars a month down there. That old and prominent pioneer of the county, Mr. A. F. Willoughby, engaged me largely on the strength of the excellent first-grade certificate which Mr. Cowgill had given me. Mr. Willoughby told me, much to my gratification, that he would like for me to come back next winter. For he was a college man, had been a teacher, had held the office of county superintendent of schools, and had sons among my pupils. I was not to return, however. One Friday night I rode home and found my father had sold the farm and was moving the family in the spring to a new farm near Mason City. I went along as a matter of course. I think that the old farm had sold for twenty-five dollars an acre and the new was bought for twenty dollars.

The new neighborhood was very unlike the old. There was no foreign element in it. Transplantation is necessary for some plants after they reach a certain size. In some respects the transplantation from Grundy to Cerro Gordo County was, I can see, good for me. My occupation of teaching threw me into new associations, in a more highly developed community. Mason City was a place of some three or four thousand. I had never been seen there with a hair-cut as bad as that which in my own mind at least marred my record in Grundy County. From the time of my going to take my teacher's examination that fall I felt myself in a new and more favorable *milieu*.

It must be remembered that my standards of *milieus* were not extremely high or based on any rich experience. Here I found many good friends who accepted me at a higher rating than I had as yet won in my old home. Some of these became very dear and lifelong friends. They were a part of my education. They formed a new and different world for me. Though I continued to live on the farm, almost at once my associates came to be in large measure men and women of influence and standing in the county and in this town of some thousands of people, which was the real center of influence in a considerable and developing territory. They were educators, professional men, merchants and their families. I began to know young people who had advantages—graduates of colleges and universities, students preparing for college; people like the Millers, the Montagues—James J., the poet, was running about the streets then—the Shepards—one of the Shepard boys is now the great railway authority of the Westinghouse Company—and other families of standing and ability. The wives of the married men were very good to me!

Among such women I had had in the old home only one friend of this class. This one former friend was Mrs. Z. T. Holtzclaw, of Holland, a village which sprang up two or three miles from our old farm when the railway came through Grundy County. Doctor Holtzclaw brought her to Holland a bride; and as she, like most doctors' brides, liked to go riding in the country with her husband, she came to our house, where, discovering my flair for reading, she loaned me *David Copperfield.*

Then felt I like some watcher of the skies
When a new planet swims into his ken;
Or like stout Cortez when with eagle eyes
He stared at the Pacific, and all his men
Looked at each other with a wild surmise,
Silent, upon a peak in Darien.

My world of letters began revolving in a new orbit. I became a Dickens addict—and I still think him, for all his weaknesses and mannerisms, the greatest master of English fiction. Dickens led me to Thackeray, to Sterne, to Wilkie Collins, to W. Clark Russell and the rest of them. I was in the midst of this new fervor when I landed in my new home.

I had, in fact, when I found Dickens, outgrown my fictional past; but save for occasional lucky finds, I had had nothing in its place. Among these pick-ups were the addresses of Robert G. Ingersoll, in which he made the church world ashamed of its brutality. I had never seen a whole book of any author's poetry. Save for the specimens of their work in my text-books and in the newspapers and such few magazines as came to my eyes, all the poets, though actual and vividly seen as names, were mere names to me. They seemed to belong to the world of romance, like kings and nobles and pirates. So of the great novelists; they were just unrelated names. Mrs. Holtzclaw cured all that with *David Copperfield*. When I saw her last, she lived in a town in northwestern Iowa. If this comes to her eyes, it may advise her for the first time of the fact that she did something directive to the mind of that boy on the prairie farm, and that he thanks her for it.

One of my pupils in the home school that winter

was Paul Bryant. The era of cheap literature of good quality was now upon us, and Paul had a paper-covered edition of Tennyson's poems which he gave me, the first treasure of that sort which I ever possessed. It was a treasure. Tennyson became as familiar to me as once had been the old History of Ohio or *Alice Learmont.* Love, with the youthful soul, is largely a matter of propinquity, as we all know, and Tennyson was my first love among the poets, the first course in a banquet with which I have never been satiated.

As in the case of Dickens, I still cling to my early passion. I know that Tennyson, in the judgment of many critics, has lost some of his eminence; but in my opinion, he will come back. The music of his verse, the splendor of his pictures and the real greatness of many of his poems will always give him a place among the greatest. I think his *Ulysses* one of the three greatest short blank-verse poems in the language. I may as well confide to you the names of these three. The first is Markham's *Man with the Hoe,* the second Tennyson's *Ulysses* and the third Bryant's *Thanatopsis.*

Now laugh, if you like! But I may as well confess that I am hopelessly old-fashioned in my views on poetry. I hold that in these days of ours we are losing sight of the distinctions between poetry and mere verse, between poetry and poetic prose, and between poetry and mere prose when arranged mechanically in such a way as to give it the superficial appearance of verse. Verse was, in primeval times, when it was invented, a system of composition in aid of memory. "Thirty days hath September, April, June and November" is a survival of this system of memories;

as was also the versified form of the multiplication table.

That body of poetry which we call Homer was left unwritten for long ages after it had become the formative element in Greek thought; even as late as the times of Solon and his friend Pisistratus these poems were enjoyed by having them recited by rhapsodists, many of them unable to read because they were blind; and were, by the decrees of these rulers, given their due order, and sung by successions of minstrels as directed by prompters.

All early poetry in all languages was unwritten. If writing had been invented first, we should probably never have had poetry, for verse was a mere aid to memory. Because they were to be sung or intoned, and for the reason that they had to be committed to memory, all highly prized compositions fell into lines broken up into poetic feet; to which was added, in some languages, the element of rhyme; and as the verse rose to the expression of high thought or passion, it became poetry. Verse awaited the touch of the poet to become poetry. When any composition lacks the poetic quality, it is, of course, not poetry, even though it be excellent verse. There is little poetry in Pope's *Essay on Man,* though the verse is tiresomely perfect. On the other hand, no matter how poetic a composition may be, if it lacks the more or less regular succession of poetic feet, it is not, in my opinion, poetry. This, of course, excludes all free verse from the list of poems.

We have to-day a new substance called bakelite, which is becoming rather important in industry. It is not furnished to its users in the form of the finished

bakelite, but in a plastic state, permitting it to be molded into its final and perfect form. Even in this incomplete state, its making is a very wonderful thing, a triumph of chemical engineering, something most admirable; but is not the finished substance. They designate it by the suffix A. This gives me my analogy. It seems to me that much of what we are taught to call poetry now, though it is very admirable as literature, is not poetry at all, but something which might become poetry if put through the last process which would give it the required primeval regularity of rhythm, and if desired, the rhyme which would render it capable of being committed to memory, and thus turn it into poetry. As it stands, it is mere Poetry A.

Almost all of Walt Whitman is Poetry A; for the Good Gray Poet was tone-deaf and could not compose real poetry save when under great stress of feeling and in a state of exaltation; and then he merely approached so near to it as to enable us to waive its imperfections. In its English translation, Job is poetry—the greatest in the language. So are the Songs of Solomon and many of the poetic passages of the Bible. The Book of Revelation is a magnificent piece of Poetry A. Emerson also was slightly tone-deaf, and lapsed into Poetry A very frequently. Most of Carlyle's *French Revolution* and much of his other work is Poetry A, and if arranged in lines like free verse would pass for better verse than most of it in poetic quality. *Ossian* is Poetry A of a high order. Miss Lowell's free verse is Poetry A of a very high quality.

Most of our free verse, however, is like Tupper's

Proverbial Philosophy, simply prose, and much of it bad prose, arranged according to a silly system of lines. It is farther from poetry than is Mother Goose, for the latter has the successive beats of the poetic feet and the rhymes which satisfy the demands of ease in memorizing. Neither Mother Goose nor the broken-backed prose of the bad free verse is poetry; but our old nursery friend does possess poetic form. And form is essential to poetry. Form is the only lack which prevents Poetry A from being real poetry; some of it magnificent poetry.

CHAPTER XXV

A FAILURE OR A SUCCESS

The winter that gave me to Tennyson brought me a measure of public and official recognition which was a part of a series of successive elevations in my standing with myself which did much for me. I received from the county superintendent a memorable letter on my work as a teacher. He wrote me that he had been unable to visit my school; but though he should have been glad to do so, no personal inspection was necessary to enable him to compliment me on my work; for it so happened that he had four nephews and four nieces in the school, and that their reports and that of their parents gave him great satisfaction. I was imparting to these pupils, he said, a love for their work and an interest in it which were very gratifying to him both as an officer and a relative. Moreover, he added, I might be interested in the statement that I was teaching the largest rural school in the county.

Not much to this letter, you think; but there was a great deal to it. I was winning recognition. No one had ever taken the pains to say such a thing to me before. If I escaped criticism, I had been satisfied. Here was a man who had never seen me since I had appeared before him one day for my examination, but who had taken the pains to sit down and

write a two-page letter of praise. Isn't there a lesson in this for employers and supervising officers everywhere? County Superintendent Klinefelter had done more by yielding to the generous impulse which prompted him to write that letter than a dozen visits could have accomplished. I was a little proud, and somewhat touched, and a good deal inspired by it.

"Good work" is a short sentence. If it were used a thousand times oftener, it would add immeasurably to our human output of good things of the spirit and the body.

In my case it was the beginning of a friendship which lasted until it was dissolved by death. Levi L. Klinefelter was then a youngish, plump, humorous person who had happened to be elected county superintendent of schools of Cerro Gordo County, Iowa. He was possessed of the strangest complex of qualities—none of them worse than weaknesses. Not highly educated, he was devoted to books and reading. He was a humorist; but was not above puns and conundrums which were funny because they were so bad. When the heel of his shoe came loose, he drew a distinction between that and Owen Meredith's *Loose-heel* [*Lucile*]. The most complicated conundrum ever committed (to paper) was I think made about this time by Bob Burdette of the *Burlington Hawkeye*. Why, asked the *Hawkeye* funny man, is a plain ruled sheet of paper like a lazy young dog? Of course one gives it up, and is informed that the one is an ink-lined plane and the other a slow-pup! (An intermission of five minutes will now be allowed in which to master this.) But "Lee" Klinefelter, in after years when his farm paper was nearing the financial

Herbert Quick, about 1879.

rocks, perpetrated one almost as good—or perhaps, still worse.

"What is the difference," he asked, "between my paper and a calf which is being forcibly fed?"

"I can see a fundamental difference," I replied. "*The Farmers' Institute* seems to lack absolutely the element of nourishment. But what's the answer?"

"One," said he, "has to succumb to the inevitable, and the other has to come to the inevitable suck!"

I make the claim for this that it is the worst punning conundrum ever made.

I am not fair, however, to Klinefelter in telling at the outset of this weakness. He was then in a place of vast superiority as compared with mine. I was a stranger whose father had just bought a run-down eighty-acres out in Lime Creek Township, away off the road. He had two or three farms, a small allotment of lots and a residence in Mason City, and was from my view-point a rich man, while I was penniless. He was one of the rising young men of the county. I had no friends in the community. He and his wife were members of a charming circle of acquaintances into which I was introduced. It was a new world to me. They welcomed me to their house, he gave me the run of his excellent library; and he even invited me to mark passages in his books, because such marks would make them more valuable to him. What greater pledge of friendship could a book lover offer?

He was very fond of good literature; and this, I believe, was the first of the ties which came to bind us. For in spite of the gulf which seemed to yawn between us, Kline almost at once actually attached himself to me. He pushed me forward in my educa-

tional work. To me, a mere country teacher, he gave the position of instructor in his teachers' institutes. He had me put on the programs of meetings of educators outside the county. To none of these distinctions was I, by any of the rules of the game, entitled. He did it because he loved me; and, I, who profited immensely by it, owe him more gratitude than I can express. He was a living proof that we are advertised by our loving friends, for he praised me to all and sundry.

Mr. A. H. Cummings, whose gift for good-natured ridicule has since long before my time there added to the sum total of human happiness in Mason City, made a joke of this proneness of Klinefelter to sing my praises. He called me Klinefelter's Discovery, and drew a vivid picture of how Kline had found me "plowin' corn in Lime Creek Township." Klinefelter ranked first as a discoverer, with Columbus and the great Doctor Kennedy of the Medical Discovery second and third. There is a sense in which Kline should be given some credit, so far as I am entitled to assume the rôle of either a Santo Domingo or a patent medicine.

Being very popular with the people of the county, Kline had no difficulty in getting himself elected for the conventional number of terms prevailing there under the rotation-in-office system; but his administration of our school affairs was, I am sorry to say, not quite satisfactory to some of the best educators. With them, I fear, my exaltation to the post of institute instructor did Mr. Klinefelter no good.

It did him no good with Miss Carrie C. Lane, then the very able head of the Mason City school system.

The fact that Miss Lane is now that great leader of American womanhood and champion of good causes whom we all esteem and admire under her name of Carrie Lane Chapman Catt renders this a matter of interest. She is another Mason City resident of that day who is now in our *Who's Who in America.*

I went to "Kline's" office one day, and found him seated in a very characteristic position, with his face turned from his desk and his eyes fixed on vacancy. After he had greeted me, he turned to his pigeonholes and pulled out two letters. One was from Miss Lane to whom he had written asking her to be one of the instructors in the coming institute. He handed this to me with an expression of deep disgust. In it she gave several reasons for not accepting the position. I forget what they were—all but one of them, which burned itself into my very being. She said that she felt that the standards of education in the county under his administration were being lowered. He had even announced that country teachers were to be made instructors in this institute!

I was the only country teacher in the list—for Tom Miller, Reverdy Miller and Art Sale were town teachers—and, moreover, they were college men. I handed the letter back stammering out some offer to abandon my place if it was embarrassing to him.

"Embarrassing, hell!" he ejaculated, dropping to a level of expression quite unworthy of an educator. And then he unfolded the other letter with an expression of pride as intense as the displeasure which Miss Lane's missive had provoked.

"Listen to what I have written her!" he exclaimed.

His answer to Miss Lane's communication was

literally a scorcher. As he read it I compared it to that great letter which Doctor Johnson sent to Lord Chesterfield, and to passages I had seen from the *Letters of Junius*. Klinefelter had surpassed himself; and when he was at his best he wielded a mighty nasty quill. He confined himself to a type of sarcasm which one might properly address to a lady; but he dealt some wieldy blows to the uppishness of our city teachers toward the country schools and the country educators, with whom the office of county superintendent had most to do. A wind went with his paws. I was proud of him and very, very sorry for Miss Lane. Why should she be so utterly crushed?

"What do you think of it?" he asked.

"It's mighty strong," I said.

Kline tore up his masterpiece and threw it into the waste-basket.

"It does me a lot of good," said he, "to work off a spell like this by writing a scorching letter. And when I've patted myself on the back to think how good I am, I refuse to make a fool of myself any further, and throw the thing away. It's a great scheme. I commend it to you."

So Miss Lane wasn't crushed. Once or twice in the years since I have partly grown up and she has achieved that true eminence to which she is so richly entitled, I have been tempted to give her and myself a good laugh over this episode in which our lives almost touched so long ago; but I have always had matters of more importance to discuss. I wonder if she remembers her part in the affair. I doubt it. There was a good deal of justice in her position. I became, however, for some years a regular instructor

in those teachers' institutes. I think I did as well as the others; it did me good, raised me in my own and the public esteem, and gave me a few dollars in money.

The father of our favorite Iowa writer, E. L. Sabin, was then an important figure in our educational system. Mr. Klinefelter secured some lectures from him for one of the institutes, and in the circular which was distributed beforehand mentioned Henry Sabin in terms of well-deserved laudation, calling him "the Nestor of Iowa education." Tom Miller, one of the group of friends of whom I have spoken, and then very active in school circles, went with me one day to Kline's office. Tom was an irreverent and irrepressible scamp, and when Kline handed us each a copy of his circular, Tom winked at me and looked solemnly at the county superintendent.

"This is a good circular," said he, "but what do you mean by calling Henry Sabin a Nestor?"

"Well," said Kline, "isn't he entitled to that distinction?"

"It doesn't seem so to me," said Tom, shaking his head. "What do you think, Quick?"

"I'm afraid, Kline," said I, "that you've made a bad blunder here. Nestor was a robber somewhere in the backwoods of ancient Greece. Now, Henry Sabin——"

"Robber!" scoffed Kline. "You fellows are crazy. Nestor was the old wise fellow, strong in council——"

"You're thinking of Procrustes," I urged, looking away from Tom. "Nestor was the robber who tortured his victims by cutting them to fit the bed. Why, Kline, you're familiar, when you come to consider,

with the expression 'the Nestorian bed of criticism,' aren't you?"

Kline, trying to conceal his panic, jumped to his feet, rushed out into another room and referred to his list of Noted Names in the old Webster's Unabridged. Presently he came back, grinning sheepishly at having been hoaxed.

"Well," said he, "we'll let the 'Nestor' stand for a while anyhow. Some of those schoolma'ams won't be harmed by having some of their feet cut off."

He was too good natured and too completely imbued with a sense of the equality of all human beings to take on any dignity. Our relations with him and with one another were much like those of a group of college students about a fraternity house; and this was as near as I ever came to those advantages of a college training, to secure which so many of our young people spend their four years and their father's funds.

Kline's sense of the comic sometimes carried him too far. For instance, there was that case of the lady elocutionist who was entertaining us in the old stone schoolhouse in Mason City one evening. She was rendering and reading a passage from Shakespeare—King John, I think—in which King John and the Bastard on one side and King Philip and Austria on the other, with the negligible aid of some sixty thousand men, were litigating with bloody weapons the title of the city of Angiers. In order that she might have full scope for her scream, she began with a line which she gave us as "Oh, ye men of Angiers!" This is a good line for screaming—try it—and her voice rang out through the audience piercingly. And

just as it fell in a beautiful circumflex on the last syllable of "Angiers," a switch engine a mile away in the Milwaukee yards answered with its "Hoot-te-toot-te-toot-too-oo-oo!" with the same number of syllables, on the exact key of the elocutionist's voice, and with the identical circumflex at the end.

The engine's mimic line came back as the poor girl was standing poised, with her ear cocked for the answer from the walls of the besieged town. It was one of those things which, appealing to an assemblage all at once, is almost sure to result in disaster to the performer. One universal burst of laughter ended the recitation. It was, as she afterward said, something terrible. And he who should have stilled the tumult and stopped the response to the locomotive's mimicry of the reader, the county superintendent of schools, was actually leading the riot, if one may be said to be leading anything who is crimson with laughter and apparently looking for a soft place on which to lie down and roll.

Most people insisted that Kline was lazy; but he was not exactly that. He could ride a hobby to a lather. If he had been actually lazy, he could have loafed and been supported by the returns from his farms; but he was ever devising some plan for great accomplishments, which always called for the sacrifice of a part of his patrimony, and each of which ended in defeat. For years, with a solicitude which was measured by my love for him, I watched him gradually but undespairingly going down the slide to his little Avernus. *Facilis decensus Averni* does not describe the process. Kline would get a foothold, would seem to be climbing up, and then would slip

down the slide, only to seize upon some other handhold which always seemed to him a sure aid to recovery—and then slip again.

He had a characteristic, which many possess, of making a start with apparent ease. He was agreeable and had the faculty of winning confidence. But he always came soon to the place where the work was more than his abilities could handle. He had a fatal proneness to become disgusted with his undertakings. There always came a time when it all seemed futile to him.

When he went out of office, he bought an interest in our local weekly paper, the *Express-Republican,* of which he became editor; but he had a fatal sort of originality which exhausts itself upon fads and foibles. The paper passed from his hands after a few years, and he founded a farm paper called *The Farmers' Institute.* If he had been a Henry Wallace, the founder of *Wallace's Farmer* in Des Moines, or a Pierce, of *The Iowa Homestead,* he would have made a fortune. He was a better writer, I believe, than either Wallace or Pierce; but he lacked the power of coordination which they possessed, and the fundamental wisdom. Gradually *The Farmers' Institute* became a mere advertising sheet, living from hand to mouth from issue to issue. As it neared its end, he once passed through Sioux City where I was practising law, and came to see me, as he always did whenever opportunity offered.

"What's your circulation now?" I asked.

"Well," said he, "I've just made a statement to the land department of the Canadian Pacific, which is carrying enough advertising with me to keep me

going for a while. I stated that my circulation is between twenty-nine and thirty thousand. And that's literally true, too. I know I've more than twenty-nine readers, and I'm sure I haven't thirty thousand!"

When this venture ended in a smash, it seemed as though Kline's career was ended. He was nearly sixty, fat and not very strong. But, he laughingly told me, he believed the Southwest was the place for a young man like himself to make a new start. The next I heard from him he was peddling fruit-trees in Oklahoma. Here, one day, he found himself unable to sell trees, moneyless save for about two dollars, and stranded in a little town named, rather appropriately, Rocky. But he went out among the few business men of the village and interested them in the project of starting a local paper there. He induced them to pay their subscriptions in advance, he got credit at the little hotel for his board, and bought a small hand-press, also on credit. He could always make a start.

He had never learned to set type, but he managed this in some way; and soon the *Rocky Advance*—again an appropriate name if Kline was really to advance—began coming to me. It was probably the worst publication ever seen typographically, anyhow at first; but it had in every number some of the old man's cheerful humor. It was well written, if badly set up. He had found something which he could do, and do acceptably. The *Advance* supported him, until the New Mexico boom came on; and then he was lured by his visions out upon the semi-arid plain on a new line of railway.

The New Mexico hamlet to which he moved his printing outfit was named from the brand of the herds which had formerly roamed over the land. This brand was the letter O and a bar—and the place was Obar. His little paper here was the *Obar Progress;* and it might easily be turned into an appropriate exclamation. Here Kline lived alone, in a shack which was at the same time his homestead shanty and his printing office, earning a living, a friend to every one, sending out a message of cheer in every number of his paper, printing in it items which were copied all over the Southwest, until he died.

One of his nephews, a former pupil of mine, went down to his funeral. He wrote me that all that scattered, drought-ridden population were stricken with grief at the death of their friend Klinefelter. There was a choir made up of these settlers which undertook to sing the hymns. They choked up with grief; and breaking down as singers, paid as mourners for poor old Kline a tribute to which I should not presume to add. After all, was he a failure? Why, if when you and I, dear reader, pass from this earth, the strangers who live about us are so loath to part from us, we may well look back, if that be vouchsafed us, and feel that we have succeeded in a life wherein the test of success and failure is not the winning of the envious plaudits of the world.

After his death there came to me a book which may have been all he had retained of that old library. It is a volume for which I had never cared, full as it is of bad verse; but Kline was fond of it, and thought, of course, that I was. It has, however, some historical value, since it was published in Cincinnati in 1860, and

is called *Poets and Poetry of the West.* In eleven pages of the table of contents, I find the names of Sarah K. Bolton, Alice and Phœbe Cary, George W. Cutter, William D. Howells and George D. Prentice, whom we now remember as writers. They then belonged to what was called the West, beginning at the Ohio River. Salmon P. Chase is listed as a poet, and so are others who subsequently found something better to do than to make the bad rhymes of which they here are shown to have been guilty.

Kline must have prized the book highly, or he would not have carried it with him in all his later wanderings. Finding it among his few effects, his friends discovered on the flyleaf the penciled inscription in his old flowing handwriting, dated at Mason City, September 16, 1901:

"When I am through with this book, I trust some kind friend may see that it is delivered to my old-time friend, J. H. Quick, of Sioux City."

A dozen years after this there were added on December 13, 1913, in a handwriting which shows that the vital fires were burning low, the words:

"Same request in force, only that Mr. Quick is now editor of *Farm and Fireside* at Springfield, Ohio, residing at Berkeley Springs, West Virginia, and is better known as Herbert Quick and is a noted author."

Poor old Kline! Dear old Kline! Even at the last he did not forget Kline's Discovery. Peace to his ashes!

CHAPTER XXVI

IN THE POND-HOLE COUNTRY

Once when I was a dozen years old or so my Grandmother Coleman offended me deeply. She was discussing my future. Her idea for an equipment for the world was physical power and the knack of saving. She mentioned my lack of ability as a worker and my smartness.

"I s'ppose," said she, "that Herbie'll have to be some kind of a patent-right man."

I believe it was the elder Mr. Weller who once remarked that lit'rachoor's low. Some of it is. But though my view of the career of a patent-right man was that it was distinctly low, I wanted to flare out in my grandmother's good old wrinkled face with a claim for that greatness which I had already staked out for myself in the domain of lit'rachoor; but how could grandma be expected to understand? What should I receive if I told my dream but ridicule? Nothing! I was, I felt, above that world by which I was surrounded. So I suppressed my indignation and went out and slopped the hogs.

Not even my success as a teacher satisfied me. I always visualized before me a stage in teaching beyond which I could not go. I could never command a position as high as that of Professor Wier, or even Tom Miller or Art Sale. Therefore, now that I could

not go to West Point and had given up the idea of going to college, I was always feeling about for some way around teaching. I liked it, but I must not be satisfied with it. I was too ignorant for this profession. I had about the proper equipment for a patent-right man. Already I was nearing the barrier. I drew a step nearer to it when F. M. Butts of the village of Wesley in Kossuth County, some forty miles west of Mason City, took so much of a fancy to me as to induce the school board of which he was a member to make me the principal of their town school. This was a step upward, and every such step brought the barrier so much the nearer.

Wesley was then a mere hamlet along the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Railway. To leave my circle of friends in Cerro Gordo County and assume a place in this village was a distinct lowering of my environmental standard. Wesley was in the midst of what we had always called the pond-hole country. Its trade territory was mostly below the margin of cultivation. Its most important industry was the baling and selling of the prairie hay which the country dwellers made in quantities.

In wet weather, the one street was a mire hole a quarter of a mile long. Sometimes it was impassable. Along this bog were a few stores, a saloon and some dwellings which breathed depression; one street back was a blacksmith shop or so; along the railway were one or two grain warehouses and the station, and several huge shells of buildings where hay was baled. Two or three streets away from the track was the one-room schoolhouse, and not far from it a building which had been converted into a schoolroom for the

primary grades. On the corner of Main Street nearest the station stood the Sherman House—it seems to me that half the declassed hotels of such places as Wesley were then named after Chicago's great hostelry—kept by a man named Dinger, who as a player of old sledge was a wonderful hotel man. I went to the Sherman House to board.

The economic status of any community does not always determine its mental and moral status; but it has its inevitable bearings upon it. There were some excellent people in Wesley, and more in the surrounding country; but one would have been obliged to search long for a place so deadly dull, so devitalized, so lacking in apparent aspirations, so dead to every vibration of our mid-Victorian thought, so cold to every heat-wave from any divine fire. Even sordid hope, like that of the mining camp of the barest frontier, gives to human life a stimulus imparting a certain attraction; but Wesley lacked even the stir of materialistic aspiration.

It took its tone from the pool-pitted plain in the midst of which it decayed. Even the surface of the landscape lacked any variety save that given by the shallow ponds left by the glaciers when they had receded so long ago. It did not possess even a natural drainage system; and the rains and snows stood in thousands of mosquito-breeding ponds in which tall cattails and other swamp growths stood rank and green in summer, and in winter dead and brown, the homes of frogs and waterfowl, and of the muskrats whose houses dotted the marshes like piles of rotting manure.

Any human community takes its character from

the soil on which its economic foundations rest. Wesley seemed to suffer from a permanent cold in its community head, from the physical and sociological Slough of Despond in which its feet waded, or stood still. Most of the people vegetated like corn growing in waterlogged soil. The business men clung to their little businesses year after year in spite of mud and stagnation. Children grew up, got their limited schooling and went away—though many of them remained to become solid and adequate citizens in the better times and the great development which came in later years.

There are two points of view from which our average American life may be regarded by writing people like myself. The one is the view-point of contempt, of which we have successful literary products in recent years. Authors looking at things from this angle see nothing for the great soul in our society save starvation and provocation to revolt. The other point of view is that of the searcher for whatever good he can find. I have something intellectual in common with those who dissect only to condemn; but when I come to look over our community life calmly, with the desire to tell the truth, I find myself unable to be a full-length, whole-cloth satirist. There is so much that is good in any community if one only gives it its true value.

Take Mason City, for instance. It was a typical community of the sort now often held up to ridicule and condemnation; but I, coming to the town from below, and searching for light and leading, found it there. I discovered in Mason City the same scattered jewels of character, ability and unselfish devotion to

those ideals which are essential to the preservation of civilization that I have since always encountered in the circles called intellectual. Mason City and New York are very like. If a comparison could be made, it would be, I feel sure, favorable to Mason City, or to any similar town out in the sticks.

If I had left the place or left Wesley in a fit of disgust at it all, gone to some university, written miscellany for the magazines for a few years, lived in some intellectual hotbed where cerebration was forced with the steam heat of an advanced-thought central plant into the flowering out of lovely but diseased bloom, and then come back to Mason City or Sioux City to draw my picture of mid-west life, I should have found nothing good—for I should not have been looking for it. As for myself, I had to have this good or perish, and found it. If it had been non-existent as some of our present-day diagnosticians would have us think, I should have perished.

I shall tell you on one of these pages of my own revolt against our system of collective life, and you will probably condemn me for my wild radicalism—some of you. But my revolt was based on my high estimate of the good in our present system, and the yearning to take away the barriers that bar the growth of our inherent beneficent tendencies. Our other friends seem to be prone to shut their eyes to the good, and impliedly to demand the destruction of a thing which is sound in the main, that an experimental governmental machine may be installed; when all we need to do is to give health to our social organism so that it may grow through self-nourishment. My attitude has always been one of admiration for

Mason City, Iowa, in 1873. A Typical Prairie Town. Taken from Top of School Building where Herbert Quick Taught in Teachers' Institute.

what the human race has done for itself and confidence in what it might accomplish without convulsive revolt; theirs, it seems to me, is one of contempt for the one and distrust of the other. In 1884 I had no such philosophy worked out; but my intellectual posture was the same. Even in the desert of Wesley I found a few oases.

My room in the Sherman House was bare, cold and uncomfortable, and the schoolhouse was still more so. I therefore spent most of my evenings in the lobby with the loungers, such traveling men as were unable to get out of town, and the business men of the village. Every one of these knew all about the affairs of every one else; anatomy of both finances and character went on ceaselessly; the intercourse had all the good-natured unmorality of the small town; it was human nature displayed in the rough. It was well worth absorption and study. I doubt if any period of my life has been of greater value to me as a lawyer, a writer, and finally as a financier, than those two years spent in Wesley.

There were the farmers contending against their unrelenting foe, a spotty and water-logged soil, succeeding and failing as farmers do everywhere, complaining as you would if you were farming; but finally such of them as could make the riffle, winning through to the better times of tile drains and ditches and the worse times of swollen land values—out of which latter the villagers, some of them, made fortunes.

I can see this village group as though it were only yesterday that I left them. There was F. M. Butts, bitterly disappointed when he found out that I was

a Republican instead of the Democrat he had thought me; but always sticking by me for all that. He was conservatively operating his general merchandise establishment, and beginning in his small exchange business to lay the foundations of the bank, which in the more spacious time which was coming he left to his son, whom he had trained for it. I wonder if Butts saw the development in the future. There was the village humorist, George Lawson, the competitor of Butts in trade, always shedding sunshine as he flew through the village on his one leg, taking two hops on his foot to one stride of the crutch. I warmed to him when I first saw him in a characteristic colloquy with Carl Oleson, our station agent.

"How's that freight train east, Carl?" he asked. "I've got some stuff to go out on it."

"It's laid up at Algona," answered Carl. "This blizzard was too much for it."

"Blizzard!" exclaimed George. "This wouldn't be a blizzard to a real railroad. Why, man, I can take a bag of feathers any time and go over north of the tracks and let 'em blow across this road and tie up any train on it! That's the kind of a road it is. Well, let me know along toward spring when she pulls through, Carl."

And off hopped George to his store.

There was Carl Oleson, that very important man, the station agent in a village which was scarcely more than what we used to call in that country a hay switch. Carl was a Scandinavian whose crooked back was higher than his head as he sat at the telegraph key which he could make talk so effectively—a good, honest, able chap with whom I roomed at the Sherman

House, and whose physical disability was all that kept him from high place in the railway field.

There were John Atkinson and Mrs. Atkinson, who made a good home for me after I escaped from the Sherman House. He was a carpenter, and a faithful follower of the Son of the Carpenter, as was his wife. I wonder where they are. And there was the Methodist preacher, who was also a carpenter, and very largely with his own hands built the village church for which I organized concerts and made rhymes as take-offs for "the reverend." He had the anti-Methodist notion that a church steeple ought to be surmounted by a cross. The congregation vetoed this Romish idea; but the preacher had his way, to the scandal of the congregation and the mirth of the community; for though he followed orders and put a weather vane on the spire, he formed it without much point or tail, and fixed it so firmly on its shaft that it would not turn with the wind. So there it stood, a cross after all—most Machiavellian trick!

And speaking of Machiavelli reminds me of Frank Hume, the lumber dealer, and the way I won him from his opposition to me; for there is always politics in a town like Wesley in the giving out of a position paying out seventy-five dollars a month. Mr. Hume was mildly against me, because, I think, Butts was for me. This attitude was not so strong, however, as to prevent his sitting down at dinner at my table in the hotel dining-room one day. I had the *Journal of Education* spread out before me and had just finished reading in it an article in praise of the educational work and the educational philosophy of the Reverend Robert Herbert Quick, then the head of one of the

great British public schools. He was referred to as a great light in education. The *Journal* referred to him as "Mr. Quick."

"Just look that over," said I, handing Frank the paper and pointing to the article.

He read it, turned the paper over to see what sort of a sheet it was, saw the "Boston" on it, and looked at me with surprise, and, I thought, an increment of respect.

"Boston paper, I see," said he.

"Yes," said I: "and perhaps the highest educational authority in this country. A very high-class publication, Mr. Hume. Out here, though, a high standing in the world of thought doesn't seem to do a fellow much good."

"I suppose that's so," he admitted. "But it's a nice thing to know that the big fellows back East think well of you, after all."

"Yes," said I; "it may mean a good deal in the way of advancement in the future."

How shockingly immoral! But I remarked the fact that Mr. Hume's attitude toward me was much more respectful and friendly thereafter. I think he was dazed into favoring me.

There was Fred Anderson too, who was the chief and only clerk in Butts' store. He put me in the papers. There was a girl in the case—a lovely young friend of mine. Fred has since gone up in county politics, has had his turn at county office and done well generally. He then wielded the power of the Wesley correspondent of *The Upper Des Moines,* one of the best county weeklies in Iowa; as it should have been, since it was edited by Harvey Ingham, now

editor of the *Register* of Des Moines; and that means that he has gone to the top. His little weekly paper in Algona was then weaning him from the law. In fact I was made the subject of an exchange of jokes between Fred Anderson and the correspondent at Irvington or Luverne. I didn't like this; but my friend Anderson knew it was doing me no harm. It is better in a county like Kossuth to be a joke than nothing at all. I remember how Fred looked as he stood behind his counter and laughed at me as I begged him to let up on his airing of my private affairs.

Not much here that was literary, or satisfactory to a young man who meant to be a writer, even though his works were still heroically unwritten, one will think. Yet I was not quite without bookish companionship. There was, for instance, that young lady who taught the primary grades one year, who could talk poetry, and was so angry at me for praising *Don Juan* that she read it through; and was not afterward any the less friendly. And soon after arriving in Wesley I found the village doctor.

I had seen a remarkable-looking man about the place and in the lobby of the Sherman House, and I had heard a doctor spoken of; but I had not associated him with his profession. He was a huge man, upward of six feet high, roughly dressed, with a dark woolen shirt, the rolled collar of which was hidden at the sides by huge, blond, unkept Dundreary whiskers, between which the chin was stubbled with a few days' growth of beard. We fell into the casual conversation of the stove side. His voice was low and guttural; but there was something in his pronunciation and

accent which excited my curiosity. The pronunciation and the diction were those of a well-educated, cultured man. The accent was that of an Englishman of the better classes. Either then or soon after, Wilkie Collins' novels were mentioned. I hesitated for the name of a character.

"I think you mean Doctor Benjulia," said he. "Well-drawn character, that."

I soon found that the doctor knew apparently all about English as well as French literature; much more than I knew. I should have felt I had found an affinity, save for the reserve whereby he limited our conversation to the impersonal; and to the field of bookish chat. I had at least found a most enjoyable person with whom to pass an occasional hour. I am glad that I did not avoid him, as a person with more talent for contempt might have done.

I gradually learned that he had taken his degree at Edinburgh; and though he never told me so, I inferred from what he said of the tropical countries in which he had lived that he was a former surgeon in the service of the British Government—probably in the army. He mentioned West Indian and South American places—Georgetown, Port of Spain and others; and he talked of dream-things like jalousies, agaves, rum, blacks, palms and coral reefs. It was like a trip to the tropics to spend an evening with him. Chiefly, however, we talked of novels; and I found afterward in his office, which was in a low, one-story, one-room hut just west of Kunz's saloon, probably the minimum of professional equipment with which he could do, but piles and piles of novels, most of them bound in paper. Of these he liked to talk, in that low, deliberate, cultured voice and easy manner.

How, I wondered, had such a man ever been stranded in Wesley; and why in the name of all that was reasonable, did he stay there? The crowd in the lobby soon told me. A railway brakeman on a Milwaukee freight train had found the location for the doctor by the simple if forcible process of dragging or throwing him off the way-car to the platform, where he lay until he sobered up, or some one helped him. One inferred from this, and from his bibulous habits, why the British service knew him no more.

He never left Wesley. Any physician can make some sort of a living in a community in which he has no competition; and this man was a skilful medical man. Soon after he was assisted to his arrival he was called to see a man who had great sores, which the other doctors called carbuncles, on his chest. Our West Indian derelict diagnosed the case as that of pus burrowing upward from some suppuration below; and by draining it off, restored the man to health. So the community had great confidence in him, when he was sober. He never wasted any money on equipages; but walked about the village, sometimes in a serpentine course; and if wanted in the country rode in wagons or buggies of the farmers.

That winter we had a great storm which lasted nearly a week. The snow whirled along that desolate plain in blinding clouds, and it grew bitterly cold. I missed the doctor, and liking him as I did, I was anxious for fear that he had been caught in the blizzard and frozen. Nobody knew where he was but none seemed to feel any anxiety for him. Finally, I determined to act, and waded through the snow to his office door which stood banked deep in drift. I knocked. No reply. I opened the door and went in.

Evidently some one had been keeping his fire alive for the stove was warm. The room was littered ankle deep in some places, with books, papers and other debris, and on the cot which looked like nothing but debris, lay the doctor, stretched out, half covered, breathing stertorously, and apparently unconscious.

I was reluctant to disturb him, but I finally shook him, thinking he might be seriously ill. Slowly he opened his blood-shot eyes. I thought I saw in his look an expression of something like shame at my seeing him in this state. The eyes closed again.

"I have missed you," said I, "and I thought you might be ill. Can I do anything for you, Doctor?"

"Yes, Quick," said he mildly but firmly, "you may leave me if you don't mind, you know."

Very polite—very firm—and very drunk. I left him.

I heard of his end not long ago. The end itself came a few years after I left Wesley. He gradually added other drug addictions to that of alcohol. The local supply of drugs was closed to him, and he put in a small stock of his own. He succumbed to the supply of poisons which thus was always before him. A relative came at the news of his death and did the things required. I have often pondered on what a hell his life there must have been. In addition to the torture which such a man, conscious of his lost estate must have endured, he must have been aware of the fact that he was held in contempt by this dead and stagnant community of people who, as compared to him, were ignoramuses. When he lost his self-control a brilliant career was wrecked. Somewhere there is a family from which he was an outcast; and because of them I have not mentioned his name.

CHAPTER XXVII

STARTING AROUND THE BARRIER

There came to me at Wesley a message from Klinefelter, my discoverer, that the county superintendents of schools of some territory called the Northern District of Iowa would meet in convention at Okoboji from July seventh to July thirteenth inclusive; and that I was requested to appear and lead the discussion of a paper by Professor W. H. Cobb, of Northwood, on *Teaching as a Means of Self-Culture.* This honor came to me without doubt through my friend Kline. I assume that when Frank Hume, our Wesley lumber dealer, heard of it, any doubts he might have entertained as to my being the Quick praised in the *Journal of Education* were dissipated.

If there was any aspect of the profession or occupation of teaching with which I might have been presumed to be familiar, it was that phase of it which related to self-culture; for I had entered it for the sole purpose of educating myself, rather than of doing the poor children any good. I accepted the position on the program of the county superintendents' convention, however, not for the purpose of enlightening that body on my cultured methods, but of meeting "the fellows," as Klinefelter suggested. I met "the fellows," and the meeting was one of those catalytic things which playful destiny throws into one's life

just to see what will happen. It is only in retrospect that one can see a part of the result, and never more than a part. I know, however, that if I had not met Major A. W. Clancy there among "the fellows," I should never have become a lobbyist at Des Moines and I should never have been the law partner of Joseph S. Lawrence in Sioux City. If I had not there met W. F. Stoner, I should never have so nearly attained the fulfillment of Grandma Coleman's prophecy that I would have to be some kind of a patent-right man as to have gone out inducing school boards to adopt in their schools certain text-books published by the house represented by him. We never know where any step will take us, do we? One alights from his car to look at the view, and in a chance word dropped by a stranger at his side finds the influence which sends him overseas or to strange realms of earth or fancy, and makes over his life.

I was immensely impressed by the fact that I was to address a gathering of such great men as the county superintendents of Iowa. Moreover, State Superintendent John W. Akers was to be there, and that C. W. von Coelln, of Des Moines, who had forced the disclosure of the date of my nineteenth birthday. Not only was I impressed but I was a little terrified. So I made sure, I thought, that there should be no failure on my part. I wrote my address in full. I then committed it to memory. I planned every act of my appearance. I would rise, step forward, glance calmly about at the sea of faces, and deliberately at first, but with rising passion and accelerated diction as the theme took hold of me, I would give those educators—I did not know that a third of the crowd would be

schoolbook agents—a treatment of *Teaching as a Means of Self-Culture* which would send them away thinking and asking one another who the gangling and tow-headed rube from Wesley, who clearly was a coming man, could possibly be.

I knew, said I to myself, exactly what I was about. The fact that I met, two days before my speech, a most intelligent maiden lady from Des Moines who allowed me to take her boating on West Okoboji Lake; that on coming into port I had found myself somehow the co-occupant of a hammock with a young lady from the same city, of the class which now would be called flappers, and had sat with her while the constellations swung majestically down into the west; that next day the mature young lady was frigid to me, not to say cryogenic; that I had gone on some fishing excursions; and that all these and other dissipations had taken the mind of the rising young educator from Wesley off his speech—may have accounted for the fact that when I rose to speak I could not think of a single word of the infernal thing. Kline sat there in agony as his discovery halted, boggled, turned all colors, I have no doubt, and finally reached clumsily into the pocket of his nice clay-worsted coat, pulled out the manuscript and haltingly read the stuff.

Did Kline denounce, condemn or even reprove me for making a mess of the address which, after vouching for me, he had given me the opportunity of making? Not he! He congratulated me; and his report of the affair in the Mason City papers stated that after Professor Cobb's "thoughtful and scholarly paper" came "a paper on the same subject by Mr. Quick of Wesley in which the reflex effect of the

teacher's training as exerted upon the future condition of society was presented with a striking originality and force." Trust Old Kline to cluster about a friend in trouble! And he insisted, in his comforting comments to me on the episode, that no man not possessed of an iron nerve would have been able to rally from his aphasia, exhume that paper and get away with it as I did. I needed all the comfort he could give me.

The schoolbook agents were a new sort of person to me, and they were here in strength. Their task, for which they were well paid, was to cultivate the county superintendents, principals and teachers, as well as the school boards, so as to be able to protect the interests of their publishing houses in holding the territory in which their text-books were already in use, and to secure adoptions where they were not. They were a smooth, able, diplomatic group of gentlemen, who knew everything to be known about schools, and much of the unknown. Perhaps the most impressive and resourceful of them was that Major A. W. Clancy just mentioned, an elegant suave person, clad in the best of tailoring, who had an attack made more difficult to resist by that empty sleeve of smoothest broadcloth. The major was a fine chap; and I always thought that those critics who claimed that the lost arm from which he got his military title had been taken off in a thrashing machine might have been in better business than that of marring such a perfect picture. At that time he represented Van Antwerp, Bragg & Co., if my memory serves me correctly.

Jonathan Piper was one of these schoolbook men who had a really important influence in educational

matters, and in the politics which is always generated by the great financial interests concerned in the matter of selling text-books to every parent in the county. Few people understand the powers enlisted in the publication of schoolbooks. Piper was a really big man. W. F. Hoig was a handsome blond personage, who belonged in the diplomatic service. O. J. Laylander was at the Okoboji convention as a teacher; but before long the book publishers took him to themselves; and in the group was the bluff, hearty, forceful W. F. Stoner, the representative of Porter & Coates, of Philadelphia.

How Mr. Stoner, unless Klinefelter suggested it, conceived the notion that I would make a good schoolbook man I have no idea; but he approached me with the proposition that I should take a position under him. He thought I could go out into the rural districts, where there was a prevalent confusion in the text-books in use, and secure adoptions. If I could, the profits would make my salary as a teacher look rather small. This placed me in a dilemma. I doubted my ability to sell books; but Mr. Stoner suggested that this was a different sort of thing from ordinary canvassing. I could talk schoolbooks as an expert. I could do the schools a lot of good by bringing order out of text-book chaos. He showed me the line of books published by his house and made an excellent selling talk to me.

I was in doubt, because I had once for a short time been a book agent. Once on the farm in Grundy County a man named Kuhl had talked me first into buying a book called *Hill's Manual of Social and Business Forms,* and then, seeing that I was easy,

into becoming an agent; and sold me all the books he had at a reduced price. I remember the agony I endured as I tried to sell these stock book-canvassers' wares. I had to sell them or go into bankruptcy. Finally I closed them out at a loss. Years after, when I was just beginning my law career in Sioux City, I ran across a man with two little black eyes set close to the bridge of a beaky nose and with a beard like a Minor Prophet, who was working on the books of a transfer company in the town of my adoption. I recognized him as Kuhl. I was in need of acquaintances, and mentioned to him the fact that he had once made me an agent for *Hill's Manual.* He looked up, dodged, though really I had made no move whatever to hit him, and hurriedly went out. I never saw him again. Whether he decamped because his sin had found him out I never knew. If he did, he overestimated my resentment. All I wanted of him was the law business of his firm.

In spite of this experience, I closed with Mr. Stoner and went out to sell schoolbooks. The plan, of course, was not to sell them direct; but to talk to members of school boards, convince them of the benefits of uniformity in books in schools where such uniformity did not exist, arrange to substitute my books for the old ones so far as the rules of the publishers would permit, secure a board meeting, and so manage that the necessary resolution should be passed. I was rather surprised at my own success, and Klinefelter was overjoyed. Within a month I had earned as much as a half year's salary as principal of the Wesley schools. I really don't know how I did it. The first two or three townships were easy.

I selected those in which I was well acquainted in Cerro Gordo County.

At last I found a township in which the president of the school board refused to call a meeting to consider the matter of a change in books. So I went about talking with the members of the board and getting them to sign a request for such a meeting. In due time I went back to the president with the signatures of a majority of the board.

"Well," said he, "you've beat me. I'll call the meeting."

"Why," said I in perfect sincerity, "I don't see how you can say I've beaten you. All the meeting is for is just to confer and consider the matter."

"Oh, hell!" he exclaimed. "They're for your scheme or they wouldn't have signed that paper!"

And sure enough they were; but I was so innocent that I had not known it. I was very much encouraged by this success. Here was a way around the barrier which loomed up before me in the teaching profession. If I could succeed in the schoolbook business, my way was clear. I should soon have a state under my supervision. I remembered Major Clancy, Hoig, Piper, Stoner, Eaton and the rest of the schoolbook fraternity, their evident prosperity, their power, their good clothes, their fine apartments in hotels. I should take my place among them. The barrier was practically passed.

And then something happened. I received word that Porter & Coates were taking their agents off the road. I can not now remember the exact status into which the business of schoolbook publication passed at that time; but it was one of the phases

which resulted in the formation of the American Book Company. The business of Porter & Coates was taken over. Mr. Stoner was taken care of in the new merger, but I was out of it. I had just taken a nibble at the feast when the banquet was called off.

There was nothing for me but to go back to teaching. I did this; but I did it with the determination to take up something else very soon. Time pressed, I thought, for I was twenty-four or twenty-five years old. I resolved to leave Wesley, go to Mason City, enter some law office and study law, making my living by selling insurance or in some other way. I would leave a profession in which I was, by my limited education, barred from any real success. I would go into one in which ignorance was no handicap—the legal profession. I was not yet ready for that other refuge for the unschooled and uninformed—the writing trade.

As I look back over my life, I am always finding circumstances which diverted the current of living and changed my life. With me there have been many such watersheds of circumstance, because, I suppose, I have been such an inveterate opportunist. This schoolbook merger was one of these things. I know I should have succeeded in the business. I had already shown that I had the faculty of handling its factors. If the merger system had not then for a few years shut off competition, I should no doubt have been a successful representative of these publishers. I should have learned by one device or another to handle teachers, superintendents, school boards, and finally, legislatures. Probably I should have thought different thoughts and lived a life on a plane quite

alien to that I have occupied. Atogether, I am not sorry that the employment ended when it did. At my age it is all one can expect when one looks back at such things to be able to say, "It's just as well."

CHAPTER XXVIII

I RUN FOR OFFICE

Forty years ago the young man of ambition among us who became in any manner prominent was very likely sooner or later to find himself running for office. That's what we called it in Iowa. I believe in New England they call it standing for office; but one had to do much more than stand to get anywhere in Iowa in his efforts to devote himself to the public good. I have run for office several times, and once or twice I have merely been a candidate. Now why? Why, in those days—and in many communities now—did such young men as myself regard county, town or other office as a thing worth seeking? My experience at Wesley in Kossuth County may give an inside view of this matter from my way of looking at it.

I had not yet determined to leave the county when I became a candidate for county superintendent of schools. That is, I had my name placed before the Republican County Convention as willing to accept the nomination, and a nomination was equivalent to an election. Did I expect to be nominated? Well, no, not exactly. I knew that I had small prospect of securing a majority of the delegates. I was a newcomer in the county. I had no acquaintances save in a small group of townships near Wesley. All the chances favored my being snowed under by some other candi-

date. Yet, there was a remote chance that the convention situation might develop otherwise. The contest for sheriff or some other office might be close. I might be able to secure a few delegations who would take so much interest in my candidacy as to trade their support for votes enough to nominate me. Other candidates for the office I sought might find their strength so equal that one or the other would be willing to nominate me to defeat an opponent who had become offensive. Many things might happen. Probably, however, I should not succeed.

But a defeat would do me no harm. Really it would do me good, if I remained in the county. If I were so fortunate as to make a good impression, I should be a figure in the popular mind henceforth. The county papers would mention me. I should in a way have my application on file for something good which might offer itself thereafter.

But why in any case did I want the office of county superintendent? As a matter of fact I did not desire it in preference to many other positions. It happened to be the one for which my occupation—one can scarcely call it a profession—might be supposed to fit me. I was a teacher. What I really wanted was any sort of promotion from the work in which I was engaged. The office of county superintendent was less adequately rewarded in the way of salary than any other; but it was a position of affluence as compared with that of principal of the Wesley schools. It would take me to the flourishing county-seat town of Algona, where it would give me an office in the court-house, and make me a member of the ruling group in a county three-fourths the size of the state

of Rhode Island. And what other avenue of advancement was there for me?

In those days such offices were eagerly sought by men in positions like mine. The ablest men in the younger group were literally forced to look at office-holding as a means of advancement. It is the same in many places yet; but it must be remembered that very few of our boys then went to college to be trained for the work of their lives. They developed their life work out of their immediate surroundings. The holders of public office received salaries which seem small to us; but they were larger than now as compared with those of employees of business houses. I suppose that those of county auditors, county clerks, county treasurers and county recorders were larger than the pay of most bank cashiers and vice-presidents; and the offices gave to their holders a very valuable acquaintance not only with the people of the entire county but with business opportunities, and especially with the inside of the land business, on which most of our fortunes were founded. They had to do with the payment of taxes for non-residents; and when such owners grew weary of holding lands and were ready to sell at a low price, some county officer was in position not only to buy low but often to have the land sold before making his purchase. There was nothing very reprehensible in this according to the ethics then prevailing, though the eastern speculator would, of course, have had another code to apply.

I did not know the details of the manner in which the public officers used their offices to establish themselves as our county aristocracy of wealth and

prestige; but I had lived under our frontier conditions all my life, and had seen the results. I had seen the big men among us growing in wealth and power as they held office and after their retirement. The student of local history will find among the prominent families of the 'eighties and 'nineties the men who held the county offices in the 'sixties and 'seventies and their children. I think that the golden days of office-holding were passing when I ran for county superintendent of Kossuth County; but I could not be supposed to know that. Anyhow, I think I was correct in thinking that if I won it would be a distinct step forward for me, and if I lost, as I expected to do, I should have gained in acquaintance and should be in no way disgraced. This is an inside view of office-seeking in northern Iowa in 1885, when I was not quite twenty-four years old.

In Harvey Ingham's weekly paper, *The Upper Des Moines,* in the issue of September 2, 1885, appeared this announcement:

"I am a candidate for the office of superintendent of schools, subject to the action of the Republican County Convention.

"J. H. Quick."

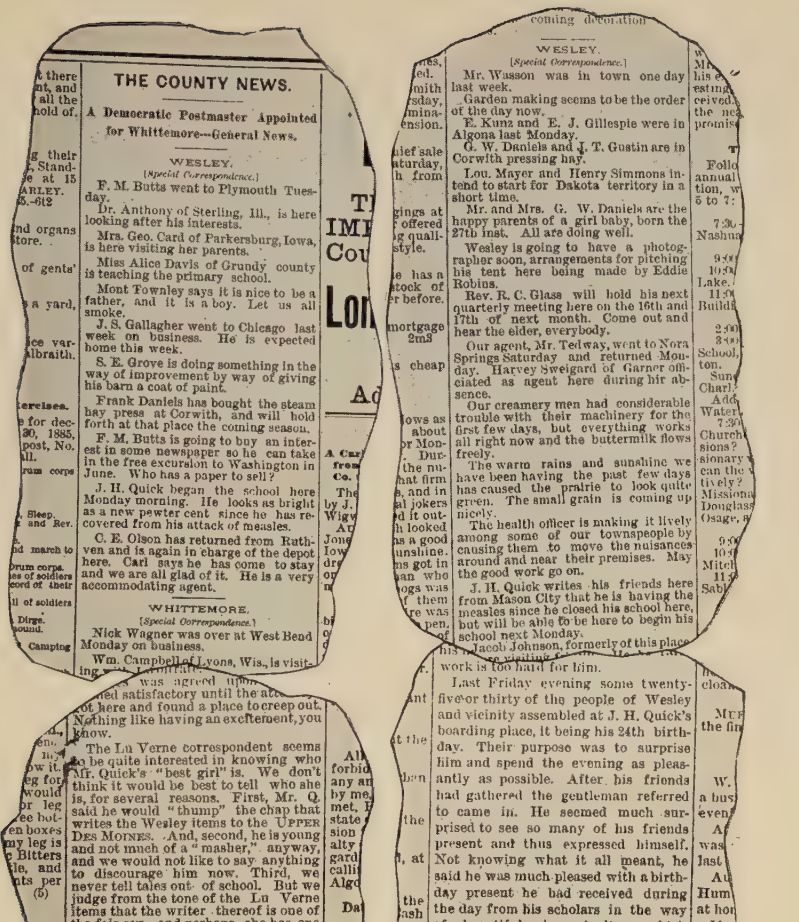
Mr. Ingham probably wrote the comment in the same paper, and in the expression "shies his castor," as compared with the English in his writing in 1925, we have a gauge of the advancement which Harvey has made since then as a writer:

"J. H. Quick of Wesley," says the old *U. D. M.,* "this week shies his castor into the ring and becomes a candidate for county superintendent, subject, how-

ever, to the action of the Republican Convention. Mr. Quick, though not as old a resident of the county as the other candidates, has shown much ability as a teacher and has prominently identified himself with the educational interests. He is a thorough Republican, and should he be the choice of the convention, would doubtless make a strong run."

Very mild, if not faint praise, this. Just about what the editor of the organ would say as a justification for supporting a candidate should he be nominated. The incident, however, brought Harvey Ingham into my circle of acquaintances, and finally into that of my real friends. I have seen him grow year by year in power and insight and breadth, until he stands as a great force for liberal and straight thinking and for moral action not only among the people of Iowa but of the whole Mid-West. I have asked him if he remembers me as I appeared at that time.

"My recollection of you," he writes, "was as you came into the office to say that you were going to run for superintendent. I can see you distinctly as you appeared then. Of course, this is its own comment on your personality. For literally thousands came and went, and I do not have the slightest recollection of any of them. Hudson tells us that we remember what we see emotionally. There must be something about the individual to arouse some feeling as we meet him, or his image passes, like the image of a casually seen house. What is it about the man of mark that you see it in him at the first glance? How few men of real distinction do we meet that we do not feel it at the time. In any event, real personality will impress itself in some way, and we remember striking figures."



THE COUNTY NEWS.

A Democratic Postmaster Appointed for Whittemore---General News.

WESLEY.

[Special Correspondence.]

F. M. Butts went to Plymouth Tuesday.

Dr. Anthony of Sterling, Ill., is here looking after his interests.

Mrs. Geo. Card of Parkersburg, Iowa, is here visiting her parents.

Miss Alice Davis of Grundy county is teaching the primary school.

Mont Townley says it is nice to be a father, and it is a boy. Let us all smoke.

J. S. Gallagher went to Chicago last week on business. He is expected home this week.

S. E. Grove is doing something in the way of improvement by way of giving his barn a coat of paint.

Frank Daniels has bought the steam hay press at Corwith, and will hold forth at that place the coming season.

F. M. Butts is going to buy an interest in some newspaper so he can take in the free excursion to Washington in June. Who has a paper to sell?

J. H. Quick began the school here Monday morning. He looks as bright as a new pewter cent since he has recovered from his attack of measles.

C. E. Olson has returned from Ruthven and is again in charge of the depot here. Carl says he has come to stay and we are all glad of it. He is a very accommodating agent.

WHITTEMORE.

[Special Correspondence.]

Nick Wagner was over at West Bend Monday on business.

Wm. Campbell of Lyons, Wis., is visiting ...

... was agreed upon ... satisfactory until the ... got here and found a place to creep out. Nothing like having an excitement, you know.

The Lu Verne correspondent seems to be quite interested in knowing who Mr. Quick's "best girl" is. We don't think it would be best to tell who she is, for several reasons. First, Mr. Q. said he would "thump" the chap that writes the Wesley items to the UPPER DES MOINES. And, second, he is young and not much of a "masher," anyway, and we would not like to say anything to discourage him now. Third, we never tell tales out of school. But we judge from the tone of the Lu Verne items that the writer thereof is one of the fair sex, and perhaps she has one day been one of his "best girls" herself, or why should it excite her curiosity so much? If she has ever been one of his "best girls" she never will be again, as one of our Wesley girls has completely captivated him. But should it be one of the masculine gender that writes the news from there, herhaps he has been turned out in the cold and is longing for some one to love him. Yet we rather think it is the former. Oh, no! we are not going to tell who his "best girl" is—not a bit of it.

WHITTEMORE.

[Correspondence of Upper Des Moines.]

Elder Wilcox and wife returned from Bancroft Thursday.

Nick Wagner took a run to West Bend on business Tuesday.

... coming decoration ...

WESLEY.

[Special Correspondence.]

Mr. Wasson was in town one day last week.

Garden making seems to be the order of the day now.

E. Kunz and E. J. Gillespie were in Algona last Monday.

G. W. Daniels and J. T. Gustin are in Corwith pressing hay.

Lou. Mayer and Henry Simmons intend to start for Dakota territory in a short time.

Mr. and Mrs. G. W. Daniels are the happy parents of a girl baby, born the 27th inst. All are doing well.

Wesley is going to have a photographer soon, arrangements for pitching his tent here being made by Eddie Robins.

Rev. R. C. Glass will hold his next quarterly meeting here on the 16th and 17th of next month. Come out and hear the elder, everybody.

Our agent, Mr. Tedway, went to Nora Springs Saturday and returned Monday. Harvey Sweigard of Garner officiated as agent here during hir absence.

Our creamery men had considerable trouble with their machinery for the first few days, but everything works all right now and the buttermilk flows freely.

The warm rains and sunshine we have been having the past few days has caused the prairie to look quite green. The small grain is coming up nicely.

The health officer is making it lively among some of our townspeople by causing them to move the nuisances around and near their premises. May the good work go on.

J. H. Quick writes his friends here from Mason City that he is having the measles since he closed his school here, but will be able to be here to begin his school next Monday.

... Jacob Johnson, formerly of this place ... his ... visiting ... work is too hard for him.

Last Friday evening some twenty-five or thirty of the people of Wesley and vicinity assembled at J. H. Quick's boarding place, it being his 24th birthday. Their purpose was to surprise him and spend the evening as pleasantly as possible. After his friends had gathered the gentleman referred to came in. He seemed much surprised to see so many of his friends present and thus expressed himself. Not knowing what it all meant, he said he was much pleased with a birthday present he had received during the day from his scholars in the way of a beautiful autograph album, which is a beauty and reflects credit on the pupils. Supper was soon announced, and he discovered something nicely done up and placed at his plate, which, on examination, proved to be a beautiful gold ring. Then, for the first time, he realized why so many had gathered there that evening. He returned his sincere thanks and said he highly appreciated their kindness. At a late hour, when all had prepared to depart for their homes, he received their congratulations, and the impression left with him was that the people of Wesley appreciated his labors as a teacher among us.

Dr. Alleyne was called to Co...

WESLEY COUNTY NOTES FROM *The Upper Des Moines.*

As to the question concerning the man of mark, I give it up. And all that Harvey says about this first meeting is that there was something—he is careful not to say what—which impressed him emotionally. There are many emotions, among them the sense of the sublime, the ludicrous, the grand and exalted. Harvey doesn't say which of these and several others I excited. I have not filed any motion for a more specific statement. Let us pass on.

I was not nominated. In fact the convention was in no way embarrassed by my candidacy. The Wesley delegation and one or two adjacent townships voted for me. I remember one phase of this convention which shows how the Civil War spirit still persisted. When the last candidate was under consideration, a delegate rose to name his man.

"I want to state to the convention," said he, "that my candidate is an old soldier. And I want to state the startling fact that we have almost completed our ticket, and have not put on it the name of a single old soldier!"

There was a hush. Had this enormity been perpetrated? Another delegate arose.

"The gentleman is mistaken," said he. "We have nominated a hero of the war for sheriff. Marsh Stevens is an old soldier, and a good one."

They breathed easier and proceeded with their work. The incident shows, however, that the great days of the soldiers' control of politics were passing. Ten years prior to this the problem of those who wished it was to get any but old soldiers on the ticket.

In April, 1886, I made my great break. I ended,

as I supposed, my career as a teacher. In Fred Anderson's Wesley items in *The Upper Des Moines* this statement appears:

"J. H. Quick closed his third term of school here last Thursday. He would have closed it a week sooner, but was called to attend the funeral of his sister at Mason City. He has given good satisfaction as a teacher. He is a hard worker, and if any of the teachers of Kossuth County for the past eighteen months have earned their money, then Mr. Quick is one of them. We have never known one who has done more hard work in the schoolroom than he, and none have left with more warm friends. He informs us that he will discontinue teaching and read law and fit himself to practice. We have no doubt he will make a success of it. He has the well wishes of all his many Wesley friends."

So I left Wesley in this little blaze of glory. I had its "well wishes." I carried with me a feeling of warm friendship for many of these people. I have told what sort of a place Wesley seemed to be then. Now it is a solid, well-established village, with all the qualities which make residence in a small town in Iowa one of the most comfortable and prosperous in the world. The farms about it are most of them drained and the village has partaken of the benefits of the development of the territory. It has moved up to the Iowa level.

CHAPTER XXIX

I DO NOT QUITE ESCAPE

One of the really scholarly and profound lawyers then practising in Mason City was Mr. John Cliggitt, who had been the partner of Captain George R. Miller in his lifetime. Captain Miller was the father of my good friends Tom B. and Reverdy J. Miller, and I suppose they spoke a good word for me to Mr. Cliggitt, as did my dear friend Duncan Rule, then clerk of the courts, who had studied under Mr. Cliggitt, and was merely awaiting the termination of his term of office to assume a partnership in the firm of Cliggitt & Rule. So when I went to Mr. Cliggitt to ask the favor of a place in his office and the benefit of his guidance in my studies, I found him ready to receive me.

He was a remarkable man. When I went into his office for my first interview, he was sitting at a desk half covered with books, in a hard, straight-backed chair, with its legs drawn forward so that it stood on its two hind feet. This was his characteristic attitude when studying. He had a theory, as I discovered, that a man engaged in legal investigation should not be too comfortable in his chair. He was what we used to call a text-book lawyer; that is, he placed great value on commentaries and legal principles as against reports of actual decisions. Therefore he had the best text-book library in that part of the state.

"There are two points of view," said he, looking me over seriously with his large brown eyes, "as to the best course of study for a man trying to learn the law. One is the old-fashioned system of studying the commentaries on the law written by the great legal lights of the profession, and mastering its basic principles. The other is to emphasize the cases which have been decided by men who as a rule don't average as great legal lights, but happen to sit on the benches of our courts of last resort. Some of our law schools are adopting the case-law course of study. I do not believe in it. Therefore I think you had better begin as I did, with *Blackstone.* After you have gone through that, we'll see."

I took down his volume of *Blackstone,* and was soon buried in the introduction. Then I wallowed in the Rights of Persons, which gradually led on to the Rights of Things—and on and on through Volumes two, three and four. I suppose I must have spent a good part of a year with Sir William. I soon discovered that whatever the law was in his time, it was right. If the law gave the juryman a day or a week beyond the time fixed in the writ of *venire facias* in which to put in his appearance, why this, according to Sir William, was perfectly proper; because it was beneath the dignity of a free-born Briton to be prompt. However when he was called upon to be there on the dot, that was all right, too; because no man's dignity could excuse his causing delay for the court. Even Mr. Cliggitt had made a penciled note on the margin calling some of Blackstone's opinions "absurd." Yet, John Cliggitt took his law mighty seriously. I must have been a source of some an-

noyance to him, for my tendency was to make a joke of everything. He had his sense of humor; but when I looked over the titles of his text-books, and laughed at such titles as *Ram on Facts* and *Rorer on Railroads,* he did not respond. Who was I to make a jest of such things?

Captain Miller, his former partner, had been for a long time an invalid, and had brought into the office a great easy-chair. One day Mr. Cliggitt came in and found me comfortably ensconced in this chair, reading *Blackstone.* He gently suggested that such Sybaritism was antagonistic to the stern pursuit of the basic principles of the law.

"The law," he said, "is a jealous mistress. And when you're studying it, such things as easy-chairs and sofas tend to a mental torpor."

I therefore avoided the easy-chair when John was present. He caught me in it several times, however, in spite of my vigilance; and one day I came in and found that this rival of the jealous mistress had been removed. All the chairs left were such as to banish mental torpor or to merge in it physical numbness. Our office, you see, was a workshop, and not a modern legal salon of padded chairs and sofas.

I read *Kent's Commentaries* after going through *Blackstone.* This was to give me a view of American law written much in the Blackstonian manner. I think it was Chitty who said that Blackstone made the law easy. As I waded through the law of real property in *Blackstone,* and tried to understand executory devices, vested and contingent remainders and shifting and springing uses, I wondered what it could have been before his time. Blackstone, to be

sure, had certain difficult things to express; but his style of expression is one which lays great burdens on his readers. In the first place as a student, I knew that the worst passages contained law which was completely obsolete in Iowa in 1886. I had grave doubts as to whether the men who might examine me would know or care anything about it. How could I be expected to be enthralled by it? Secondly our great legal author took no pains to make his meaning clear to any mind which did not take the pains to scan every phrase, analyze every sentence, and praying God to aid his memory, set down his conclusions. He moved onward from phrase to phrase, from clause to clause and from proposition to proposition, relying on the memorized mastery of each before the next was attacked, hinging each momentous conclusion on the preceding ones, seemingly quite careless as to whether his victims turned over the page enlightened or completely befogged. I had thought until recently that no modern writer had ever attained the power of mystification possessed by Blackstone, especially in his treatment of the law of real property as it stood in England in his day. But I have now found his equal. It is the man who wrote the instructions sent out with the income-tax blanks for the Bureau of Internal Revenue of the Treasury Department for 1925. If there is such a thing as reincarnation, Sir William Blackstone lives again in him.

Kent was much easier. After Kent came *Chitty on Pleading,* followed by Sir James Fitz-James Stephen on the same subject. Somewhere along here I began on *Wait's Actions and Defenses at Law and in Equity,* which I believe was the first of the books

intended to cover the reported decisions, as a sort of compromise between the commentary and text-books, and the reports; a movement which has led to such great works as the *American and English Encyclopædia of Law* and others which tend to bankrupt the practitioner if he buys them. When I was on *Wait's Actions and Defenses* Mr. Cliggitt made his first concession to case-law. He had me read the *Code of Iowa* so far as it related to the subjects covered, and to study the cases cited in the *Iowa Reports*. Then I read *Wharton's Criminal Law* with a similar lap-over on the Code and the Reports.

This is interesting to lawyers only, and probably not to them; and they only will understand that I have outlined a rather logical course of study, which involves enough to take all the time of a student for two or three years if he gives to the work only his mornings and evenings, and his Saturdays and Sundays and holidays, making no allowances for social diversions, choir-singing, and the other musical activities into which I was tempted. Mr. Cliggitt finally came to hint to me that I was making it difficult for him to give me the certificate required of him on behalf of one seeking admission to the bar. My greatest weakness all through my life has been my tendency to follow off squirrel tracks instead of keeping my nose to the real scent.

I had not been long engaged in my law studies when I discovered that my plans for making a living by selling insurance or in some other way vaguely envisaged—were not taking effective form. I did accept the agency for an assessment life-insurance company; but on working out the mathematics of its

plan, I made up my mind that it was fundamentally defective, and that if I procured members of the organization they would find, perhaps after they had passed the insurable age, that their certificates were worthless. So I threw up this employment. My accumulated savings were getting low. I began to wonder what I could do. One day my problem was solved for me.

Mr. James Rule was then president of the City National Bank, and one of our most prominent citizens. He was also a member of the school board of Mason City. Meeting him one day on the street, I was stopped by him.

"What are you doing, Quick?" he asked.

"Studying law in John Cliggitt's office."

"Any plans for earning anything?" he then asked.

"Well," I replied, "I thought I would sell insurance—or something."

"Sold much yet?"

"N-no," I was forced to reply; "the fact is, Mr. Rule, I haven't tried very hard yet, and the openings don't seem very promising. I can do it, though."

"Certainly," said he. "But I notice that the boys that make a living at such things have to put in about all their time at it. Now you know teaching. I thought of making a proposal to you. Over on the South Side we have a building with four rooms where we carry the pupils up to the point of being promoted into the sixth grade in the main building. We've never had a principal there. All the rooms have looked to the city superintendent for control. This has led to confusion. Most of the children belong to the families of railroad men who are away

from home a good deal. The rest of the families are working people, many of them foreigners. A lot of the boys are sort of running wild. The board would like to have you take charge of that building as principal. You'd better think it over and let me know."

"But," said I, "I want to study law."

"You can go right on with your law studies," said he. "All we ask is that you straighten out that school situation. If you do that, the board will be satisfied if you have a law book on your desk all the time."

"All right," I replied, urged by a feeling of emptiness in my pocket, "on that basis, I'll take it."

And so it happened that I kept on teaching. I used to reach the law office at about half past seven in the morning, or perhaps a little earlier, sweep the floors, dust off the desks and sit down to my reading. Sometimes the first bells of the school would commence ringing before I had read more than a page or two. At this signal I would rise and walk over to my school, and before nine my outlines for the morning's work would be on the blackboards. I kept a law book on my desk and found a little time at the noon intermission to study. I found that I could not—at first, anyhow—go straight to the office for some reading before my evening meal. The vice of the school was truancy, and the cure for that required frequent visits of a parochial nature. I became well known to the parents of recalcitrant boys. Gradually these young chaps began to take their school attendance more seriously. Things began to be straightened out. I could read from say, five to six; and when not following some false scent, I had my evenings with my books in the office.

In actual good, I do not believe I ever accomplished more than in those four years as principal of the South Side school. Our four teachers worked together loyally. The pupils—we had three classes to a room instead of the regulation two—went over to the main building quite up to their required grade. The effect of the new régime on the community was something which I never realized until just before I left that work, when the milkman who delivered milk to that neighborhood stopped me on the street one day to tell me about his views upon it. He was a highly respectable farmer named Deacon Dunham, who produced the milk he sold.

"Mr. Quick," said he, "I have wanted for a long time to tell you of the good work you have done on the South Side. Before you went there, I declare I sometimes thought of leaving the South Side out of my route on account of the way I was treated by the boys. They were rough boys, I tell you. They played all kinds of tricks on me. I hated to drive through the place. Very soon after you went there I began to notice a difference; and now there's not a better behaved lot of boys in the city than they are. I don't know how you did it; but you've reformed those boys. It isn't only that they behave better in school hours and around the school grounds, where they used to mob me as I went by—they're a different crowd all day and all over the South Side. And they're just as different in vacation as when school is in session. I want to congratulate you and to thank you."

I am as proud of this testimonial as of any that ever came to me. It seems to me that it meant more than any praise for a thing written, for it meant that

I had accomplished some good in a work on some two hundred or more human beings. I really believe that a large proportion of these boys and girls grew up into better citizens on account of the labors of the good women who had charge of the lower rooms, and my own.

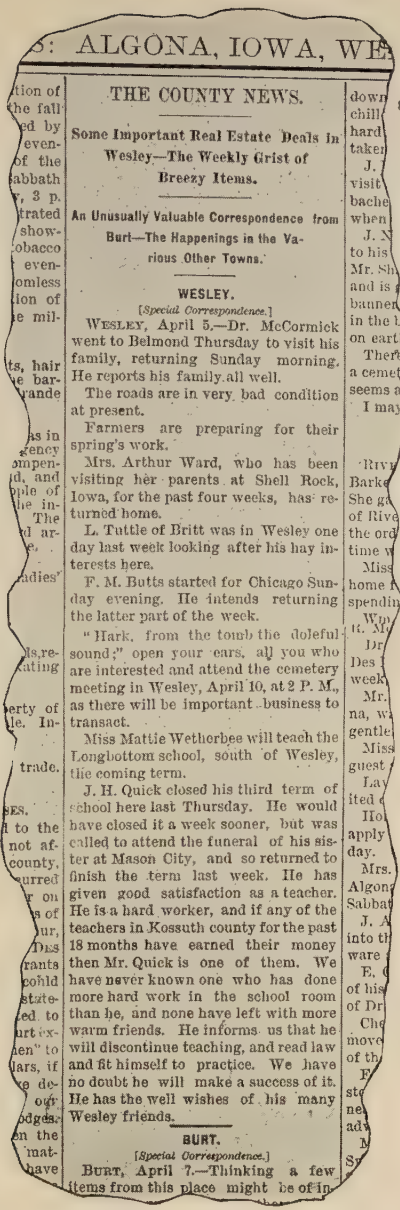
Not all of the boys were reformed, however. I remember one Irish boy whose blue eyes sparkled with intelligence from the front seat, where order required that he be seated. But the intelligence was not that of one engrossed in his studies. It related to almost anything else. His father had been killed when at work for the railroad and his mother became a washerwoman. There was a fund of a thousand dollars or so which the railway had paid in settlement of her claim for the loss of her husband; but that was held intact by the courts until the youngest of the children should be of age. Meanwhile the family was supported by the earnings at the washtub. I often wondered what would become of the youngest, who was my blue-eyed mischief on the front seat. I could see that the others would become industrious workers.

Another member of the school, who became a barber in Sioux City, told me what the blue-eyed youngster did. When he was twenty-one the money in court was divided. He took his share, went to the haberdashery and bought himself the best outfit of clothing he could find. It was the first time in his life that he had been well dressed. I can imagine his pride as he stepped out on the street with the consciousness that from hose to hat perpendicularly, from nobby overcoat to fine underwear horizontally,

he was garbed in the best. I can imagine the relief he felt to be rid of the cheap, plain patched clothes which had been all the washtub had furnished forth. And in his wallet was the balance of the cash from that estate of his father which had come from the catastrophe of the caving gravel pit.

People must have looked at him with admiration; for he was a broth of a boy, with those great blue eyes which made him look so innocent. Some looked at him with other feelings than admiration. Our town had its little gang of card sharps and sure-thing men—I could mention their names—who saw in my former pupil a lamb to be sheared. They made a companion of him for a little while; and when he emerged from the little game into which they lured him, the poor boy had his good clothes and nothing else.

He disappeared—faded from the landscape of Mason City for a year—maybe two years. Then he returned, looking as innocent as ever, and wearing excellent clothes. His right arm was in a sling—or maybe it was his left—anyhow, when, apparently too guileless to know how they had done him out of his inheritance, he sat into another little game with the gamesters of the old crowd, he was handicapped, as it seemed, in handling the cards by the fact that he did it perforce with his one uninjured hand. When the game broke up, however, something like this had taken place: Every other man had, on Blue-Eyes' deal, held a wonderfully strong hand; but Blue-Eyes held just over the best of them; and he had gazed into their eyes and swept up all the money they had, and then smilingly backed out of the door, bearing the



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THE COUNTY NEWS.

Some Important Real Estate Deals in Wesley—The Weekly Grist of Breezy Items.

An Unusually Valuable Correspondence from Burt—The Happenings in the Various Other Towns.

WESLEY.

[*Special Correspondence.*]

WESLEY, April 5.—Dr. McCormick went to Belmond Thursday to visit his family, returning Sunday morning. He reports his family all well.

The roads are in very bad condition at present.

Farmers are preparing for their spring's work.

Mrs. Arthur Ward, who has been visiting her parents at Shell Rock, Iowa, for the past four weeks, has returned home.

L. Tuttle of Britt was in Wesley one day last week looking after his hay interests here.

F. M. Butts started for Chicago Sunday evening. He intends returning the latter part of the week.

"Hark, from the tomb the doleful sound;" open your ears, all you who are interested and attend the cemetery meeting in Wesley, April 10, at 2 P. M., as there will be important business to transact.

Miss Mattie Wetherbee will teach the Longbottom school, south of Wesley, the coming term.

J. H. Quick closed his third term of school here last Thursday. He would have closed it a week sooner, but was called to attend the funeral of his sister at Mason City, and so returned to finish the term last week. He has given good satisfaction as a teacher. He is a hard worker, and if any of the teachers in Kossuth county for the past 18 months have earned their money then Mr. Quick is one of them. We have never known one who has done more hard work in the school room than he, and none have left with more warm friends. He informs us that he will discontinue teaching, and read law and fit himself to practice. We have no doubt he will make a success of it. He has the well wishes of his many Wesley friends.

BURT.

[*Special Correspondence.*]

BURT, April 7.—Thinking a few items from this place might be of in-

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PARAGRAPH FROM *The Upper Des Moines* ON THE AUTHOR'S DEPARTURE FROM WESLEY.

avails of the only thing he had ever really studied, and a sense of gratified resentment.

"He was a wonder," said Charley Wilson, who told me of this. "When he went out on a grafting tour he always had his arm in a sling, until the fellows got on to it. Why, he could deal seconds with one hand!"

No one of my readers who has never tried to deal seconds can quite understand my former pupil's proficiency. He was known to the sporting profession of the whole Northwest under the sobriquet of something like "Pike McGrath." I can not tell, I am sorry to say, of his final reformation. One day he was found in his luxuriously-furnished apartment in St. Paul, dead, with a knife thrust through his heart. The police theory was that some one whom he had trimmed had killed him; but Charley insisted that a woman had done the deed. *Vale* Blue-Eyes! I wish the deacon's praise to me for my reforms could have been so far justified as to extend to you!

Sometimes I receive letters from those boys and girls, now middle-aged people. I find many of them in positions of influence and usefulness. Almost always, after all these years, I know the handwriting. And I must tell about the method of making children write well without teaching them. I believe that most of the time spent on penmanship in our schools is wasted. My handwriting was always bad, and these children knew it. Because we had three classes instead of two, we had to save time; and a part of this I saved by eliminating all systematic training in penmanship. We found something better.

Many of our class exercises in writing, and a good

deal of the correction of these was done by the pupils by exchanging papers or slates. I established the rule that every word in these exercises must be legible, and that if in any word there was a letter which could be construed as something else than the one required, it was scored as an error. Thus the fourth stroke of the small *a* must be brought back to the base line or it was called an *o*. The small *l* must be topped with an open loop or it was called an uncrossed *t*. Each letter must be made so that it could be nothing but the correct one. If the word was so legible that it could not be misread even under this rigid rule, it was accepted as properly written. The one requirement was a legibility which hypercriticism could not question.

Given this, and the size of the letters, their slope and their character were immaterial. The result was that each child developed its own characteristic handwriting. That, I believe, is the reason for my recognition of these specimens after so long a time. I remember one little girl who was left-handed, whose writing, sloping evenly backward, was one of the most beautiful I ever saw. My classes were noted over in the main building as having the best handwriting in the city, with one exception; and those were the classes of Mrs. Weir, who was a specialist in penmanship. But she spent much time training her pupils, while I spent none at all. I simply required legibility. When I have carried out all my other reforms, I shall devote myself to the task of saving the time in our schools which is wasted in training pupils to write. Probably it would do more real good than some of the others.

Is there anything in the belief that handwriting shows character? I suspect that there is, if we could

only solve the mystery. Certainly handwriting shows temperament, mental or physical, or both. This is proved by the fact that a certain style of handwriting is inherited. It runs in families. This is not a matter of imitation, though imitation may sometimes have something to do with it. I have often been able to tell a family to which belonged a child coming into my classes, from the characteristic family handwriting known to me through the penmanship of its older brothers or sisters who had gone on to the main building; and this in cases in which from the character of the family the chances were that the younger member had never seen much of the written work of the older ones. If character is inherited—and I suppose there is no doubt of that—and the plexus of qualities in the individual produces a family type of handwriting, I think it is reasonable to infer that in some way the handwriting expresses or betrays the character.

CHAPTER XXX

MY COLLEGE OF THE LAW

"My days," wrote Job, after he was somewhat advanced in years, "are swifter than a weaver's shuttle," and in view of the fact that he is moved to add, "and are spent without hope," I wonder why he kicked about it. The increasing swiftness of one's days as they pass is one of the interesting phenomena of this life, which I find never ceases to develop new points of interest.

In this looking backward of mine, I am a little astonished by the fact that the longest period of it in retrospect is the dozen years I lived on the farm we called the Crippen Place in Grundy County, when I was between six and nineteen. Is this because during those years I confronted the world as a new thing and met so many exigencies for the first time? I imagine so.

As an organism, we grow old with diminishing rapidity as the years go by. We age faster in the nine months previous to birth than in all the rest of our lives. "Our bodies," says some forgotten writer read long ago, "are seventy-year clocks," adding that the angel of life winds them up, locks the door and hands the key to the angel of resurrection. But this clock runs faster when it is first wound. The pendulum ticking off the moments for the aging person

is like one which moves slower and slower, unless the mechanism breaks, slower and slower, until with the superannuated one the change in a decade is hardly noticeable; but finally its arc of swing is imperceptibly shortened, until some morning, perhaps, it is found to have ceased.

I have a scientific friend who has formulated a hypothesis of the basic laws of the universe which partly repeals Newton's law of gravitation. Under this new hypothesis, any body set moving in space uninfluenced by any other body would move with constantly decreasing speed. I am in doubt as to whether or not it would ever come to a complete stop; just as I am about the hypothetical frog in the well, which is supposed to climb upward a certain distance the first night, and fall back two-thirds of this the next day, keeping up this proportion of fall to climb indefinitely, or until he gets out. Will he ever get out? The end of life comes upon those blest or cursed with longevity in some such manner as the stoppage in space of the body just mentioned—only the end is sure to come.

Job's days only seemed swifter than a weaver's shuttle because he passed so few mileposts or landscape features worth looking at. They seemed swift because he was moving so slowly that he had little by which to remember them. One of the shortest sea voyages I ever made was from Vladivostok out between the islands of Japan and by a great circle route to San Francisco. It was long in time, but shorter in retrospect than a trip from New Orleans to Panama. So it is with our lives. As experience dulls the eyes of observation, the memory begins to set down ditto marks in the columns of events, and the space

accorded to each year in memory's ledger grows shorter. And memory deals not with length of time but with the succession of shocks. The idiot can have but little perception of length of time. If life were really a tale told by an idiot, it would not be full of sound and fury—or anything else. It would be a blank page.

Even at twenty-five, the years seem in retrospect to pass more swiftly. My four years in Mason City were busy and important ones to me; but they seem to have passed with rapidity much greater than that of any four years on the Crippen Place, when I seemed to be merely vegetating on the farm.

I was now on a new basis in the town. I was no longer a country boy who had some town friends. So far as residence was concerned, I was one of the community, with the right to vote and the entrée into the inner circle of the management. I lived with my good sister, who made a home for me all those years.

I began to line up with the men of influence whose personalities had attraction for me. My recent experiences had mitigated my verdancy somewhat. All this was educative. I began to take the lawyer's view of things. I found the bar most friendly, and for that matter the whole community. But the lawyers in any community are often the most intelligent men in it. They have the broadest minds and usually the narrowest sympathies. Their intelligence, their knowledge of human nature, especially in its weaknesses, their intimate touch with almost all its affairs, and their acquired power of statement have given them the preponderant influence in affairs of state which they traditionally enjoy in America; while their narrow

sympathies, their addiction to technicalities, their subserviency to vested wrongs as well as vested rights, and their tendency to unscrupulousness in methods and to skepticism as to the good in humanity as a whole, have made that influence a barrier to progress. I feel certain that the world would be far better off if we had fewer lawyers in our legislatures and in our public offices generally. Many of them, of course, possess the good qualities in which, in my opinion, the profession as a whole is lacking; and they are able.

I found them a most interesting lot of men with whom to foregather in the office, in the court-house, on the street, and wherever men come together. There was I. W. Card, for instance, with, as a Scots friend described him, "his long skinny claws, his glitterin' eyes and a beard like the witch of Endor." My Scots friend mixed his figures a little; but no one who remembers Mr. Card will fail to see that there was fidelity in the description. He looked like Merlin, and there was something of the magician in him. One would have had to look far to find a more agile and resourceful mind than that of I. W. Card.

James E. Blythe was then a youthful lawyer who—it seemed odd to me—was seldom seen in court; but his firm—Blythe & Markley, then had and still retains its lucrative practise, for which Mr. Blythe is to be credited with his full share. He was a fluent and forceful speaker, whether on the platform or in casual conversation; and was absorbed in matters political, in which he belonged to the extreme Right Wing—as I believe he does still. I had not then fallen into my later radicalism, and used to go out to the country schoolhouses and make speeches.

I remember tours of a political nature with Jim Blythe, which we made with horse and buggy, laying plans for doing up the "pestiferous farmers" who were always revolting against the management of the party, talking of books and orations, and discussing the good of the party—which was mainly the good of ourselves. In this we were conscious of no sordid self-serving. We were really in earnest; and Jim, if he reads this, will still believe in us as we were then. I had a good time with him always; and I learned about standpatism and political maneuvering from 'im.

Jim was a Republican. His partner was J. E. E. Markley, a handsome, vigorous, able lawyer who carried the Democratic banner in the firm; but he also was a Right-Wing influence. Charles Hughes, of the firm of Glass & Hughes, was a man of ghastly seriousness whose eyes never had a glint of expression, but who was a mighty strong contender in any litigation in which he was retained. He had a habit of drawing his mouth down under his left ear at some stage in every sentence uttered by him. One day Jim Markley went on the witness stand to testify in some formal matter in a case in which Blythe & Markley and Glass & Hughes were opposed. After the direct examination, Mr. Hughes settled himself in his chair and leaned eagerly forward as if entering upon a grilling cross-examination.

"What is your full name?" he asked, jerking his mouth down toward his shoulder.

"J. E. E. Markley," was the reply.

"Your full name, sir," said Mr. Hughes, with the manner of one who regarded the answer as something

which would be decisive of the case. We all listened eagerly, for Mr. Markley's three initials had always represented X. He seemed to be reticent about them—I suppose because of the country-town humor which loved to roll the complex name under its tongue. Mr. Markley objected to answering. That made it funnier. Mr. Hughes insisted. The court ruled that Mr. Markley must answer.

"James Edward Earle Markley," he replied, with every manifestation of having had his dearest privacy invaded.

"That will be all for this witness," said Mr. Hughes, without a smile, but with a most phenomenal jerk of his mouth under his grizzled beard. "The witness may stand aside. I have always wondered about that name, Jim."

"Call the next witness," said the court. "Order in the court, please!"

This incident could have had none of its humor if the Mason City bar had not consisted of a group large enough for the development of the group spirit, and small enough so that every member knew all the rest rather intimately.

P. J. Dougherty—familiarly called Pat—made a sort of headquarters of John Cliggitt's office, and one day borrowed our *Code of Iowa.* All of us borrowed books from one another so freely that every lawbook in the town was at every lawyer's disposal. I can not think of any legal quarrel which would have created such an awful breach between two firms as to have stood in the way of the mutual borrowing of books. When Pat returned our *Code,* it was nicely covered with brown paper, stitched down within the sheepskin

covers. Mr. Cliggett looked at it curiously. Such meticulous care of a borrowed book was not characteristic of Pat. Finally we found in it some papers in the case he had been trying. It was a justice-court case just over the Minnesota line. Pat had found in the *Iowa Code* some law which exactly fitted his case and had covered the book so as to hide the fact that it was not the Code of Minnesota.

We made a mayor of Mr. Hughes shortly after he had ravished Jim Markley's name from him, in a contest which rather dwarfs any political fight I have ever seen; but he was not a politician. That part of the firm's business went to John D. Glass, his partner, who became a state senator. Mr. Glass was a precise-spoken bearded man who stood very high in social and church circles. He was always a little off my legal and social bent, though we were on excellent terms. Later, he took as his partner Mr. J. J. McConlogue, who, with Pat Dougherty made up the Irish contingent among us.

When I first saw Jim McConlogue he had just opened his law office, and was scarcely more than myself acclimated to the atmosphere of the bar. He was a huge, brawny young man, with a slow, friendly smile, and none of the traditional Irish vivacity; but if ever a man had the map of Ireland in his face, Jim McConlogue did. It was broad, red and typically Hibernian. This young lawyer had in him, one felt, an odd power and force. It was the force of a charming and sincere personality. I suppose that he never met a man who did not feel drawn to him, and the number of his friends as he went on prosperously was about equal to the number who knew him.

We were all intimate enough to call or refer to each other by our nicknames, like brothers; and we had all the jealousies and dislikes of brothers—but not enough to keep us from borrowing books. It was the typical atmosphere of the legal brotherhood. Dick Wilbur, tall, gray-bearded, with a tendency to stutter, had no impediment in his law; Joe Clark, intense, ambitious, vivacious, slender, pale and active, was well started on the career which has placed him for years now on the bench; John Stanbery, Clark's partner, who was called a lawyer chiefly because he had a law office, was a solid citizen and I have no doubt a useful member of the firm; John Sherwin, then district attorney, a suave, friendly, able man, the friend of every one—including me, I am proud to say—was not regarded as a very profound lawyer, but finished his career by a long term of office on the supreme bench of the state; D. W. Telford had his own specialty of real-estate law; A. H. Cummings was the one through whose acrid Vermont humor I was dubbed Klinefelter's Discovery; Richard W. Montague, now of Portland, Oregon, a scholarly young man, was then peeping into the practise in Mason City; Reverdy J. Miller, the friend whom I have so often mentioned, was maintaining a law office, but thinking more of many other things than of the law—they all, old and young, including John Cliggitt, whose offices I was sweeping out and warming by the fires I built, and whose books and I were mutually wearing each other out—all of them seem more like fellow-students in some very interesting school than anything else. There is not one of them whom I should not like to-day to grasp by the hand and with whom I should not like to sit down and

talk for hours. Some of them are still with us, but most of them have passed on. They were all very good to me.

The justice court furnishes a great store of amusing stories in any gathering of lawyers. It is the butt of all jokes and deserves all the ridicule it receives. Yet the ridicule which descends on the poor country justice of the peace really should fall on the lawmakers who permit such a relic of barbarism to persist as the election by townships of magistrates who are not required to possess any legal education. Pat Dougherty's use of the camouflaged *Code of Iowa* in the court of a Minnesota justice of the peace was, of course, a legal enormity; but it is only a mild instance of the absurdity inherent in the trial of causes by these cadis of the countryside.

George W. Argo, once a well-known lawyer of Sioux City and Le Mars, once tried a case before a country justice whom he somehow during the trial induced to rule that evidence should be admitted or excluded according to the popular vote of the crowd present at the trial. Argo had the crowd with him.

"Did you see the defendant strike the complaining witness?" the infuriated attorney on the other side would ask.

"I object!" George would interject.

"All in favor of his answering the question say aye," said the justice, putting it to vote. "Contrary, no." A roar of Argo's supporters would shake the house. "The noes have it and the witness can't answer," was the ruling. Naturally, Argo won. Naturally, also, the opposing lawyer had to buy the drinks at the bar of the "House of Lords" or "The Senate"

Mr. Quick in the Back Row and a Group of Friends. Taken in the Late Eighties.

in Le Mars when they got home. This huge joke set the bar tittering when we gathered for the call of the docket on the first day of the next term.

A joke, too, was the predicament of my preceptor, John Cliggitt, in a case in which he was defeated by Mr. R. M. Todd, the chief citizen of Rock Falls, in our county. Mr. Todd was not a lawyer, nor was he obliged to do pettifogging in justice court for a living. I think he did it sometimes because he liked it. Anyhow, one day Mr. Cliggitt found himself pitted against Mr. Todd in a nuisance case in Todd's own town, where he had some advantage over any slick lawyer from Mason City. Mr. Todd knew no law, knew that he knew none and cared nothing for his lack. He relied for his victory on the human elements in the case. In the course of the trial, in which Todd rather played horse with the dignified Cliggitt, the latter began reading from that well-known work *Cooley on Torts.*

"Just a minute, here!" cried Mr. Todd. "What book is this counsel reading?"

"This is *Cooley on Torts,*" replied Mr. Cliggitt.

"Your Honor," urged Mr. Todd, "I suggest that you ask him who wrote that book."

"The book," answered Mr. Cliggitt, "is a well-known authority on the law of torts, and was written by that celebrated Michigan lawyer, Judge Cooley, now a member of the Interstate Commerce Commission in Washington. There is no higher——"

"Your Honor," said Mr. Todd, dropping his voice in horror, "this is an outrage! This man thinks we out here in Falls Township are fools. He must—if he thinks you will stand it to have him bring in the writ-

ings of a Michigan man on the law of a manure pile in Iowa! You may be willing to have your court made a laughing-stock; but if I were in your place I'd be tempted to fine counsel on the other side for contempt of court!"

"See here," exclaimed the justice, "you'll have to stop such monkey shines as this, Mr. Cliggitt. I don't want to hear any more from that book. Lay it down!"

To a man who took his law so seriously, this was a blow. But when he saw R. M. Todd's expression turn from indignation, as he faced the justice, to one of triumphant mischief as he winked at John, he made the best of the situation and reached for a real Simon-pure Iowa law book—*Conklin's Iowa Justice*.

"What did you say that book is?" yelled Todd, leaping to his feet.

"*Conklin's Iowa Justice,*" replied Mr. Cliggitt.

"Your Honor," exclaimed Mr. Todd, "hasn't this horseplay gone about far enough? Not satisfied with bringing in Michigan law to try to fool us country people, this slick city practitioner now has the nerve to cite to as good a Republican justice of the peace as there is in Iowa, no less a traitor than Roscoe Conklin, the man that busted up this administration. Enormity could go no further!"

Todd sank back panting—or so it was reported. The justice was not easily dissuaded from fining Cliggitt—and Todd won the case. Cliggitt was a really profound lawyer, quite above trickery, strong, though never brilliant in court, sage in counsel, and possessed of much dignity; but those well enough acquainted with him sometimes ventured to twit him of his in-

feriority to Mr. R. M. Todd. I have told the story as 'twas told to me, and John never actually denied it.

The justice of the peace in England has fared rather badly at the hands of her literary men; but he is clearly a much more respectable figure than his American namesake. Our justices of the peace are often inferior and ignorant because we have, in selecting them, fallen into the American vice of electing a lot of officers who should be selected in some other way. In Canada, a justice of the peace is an official who commands and deserves respect. He is not elected locally, as are ours. We would do well to change our system. I believe the justices of the peace should be appointed, preferably by the courts; should hold office for long terms and should be men of legal training. In the rural districts our present system leads to such inefficency and ignorance as I have described; and in the cities to irregularities and graft, which are much worse.

CHAPTER XXXI

SOME NEGLECT OF THE JEALOUS MISTRESS

One of our novelists of condemnation could revel in the crude materialism of Mason City at that time—or now; or of New York or Philadelphia, either. We had no institution of learning higher than our public school. There was in the city no club devoted to the study of literature, history or science. We had no Y. M. C. A. to arrange lectures for us, nor any other organization with the same functions. Parker's Opera House took the attractions which came along, and many of these I saw; because my friend Klinefelter, through his newspaper, very often had press tickets for me. These shows in a town of three or four thousand people were not often of a very high order; but occasionally the Andrews Opera Company, a family organization with headquarters somewhere in southern Minnesota, gave us excellent presentations of light opera; and such actors as Thomas W. Keene presented Shakespearean plays once in a while. Such cultural activities as we had grew mainly out of church activities.

Our family has always had a flair for music; at least since my father in his young manhood was chorister in his little church at Danby or Candor, in Tompkins County, New York. I had no musical training, but somehow—I forget how—I found myself a

member of the choir of the First Methodist Church, under the leadership of a man who was one of those intellectual Robinson Crusoes, a person wrapped up in art in an undeveloped and materialistic society, L. L. Huntly. He was a good organist and had an excellent tenor voice. He confided to me one day that he was a cousin of the American Hemans, Lydia Huntly Sigourney, most of whose poems are now forgotten along with those of the British versifier with whom she was so often compared.

Mrs. Sigourney's poems still commanded some rather unmerited attention in the 'eighties. It rather startled me to hear Professor Huntly refer to her as Lyd. Huntly agreed that if I would sing for him in the church, he would do what he could with my voice. This was not very much, and yet it enabled me to earn a little money afterward at a time when I needed it, and it brought me into close relations with some musicians, many singers and a few churches. It gave me an intimate familiarity with the palms of the hands of many ministers, as they stood with their hands behind their backs and preached. All these things are worthy of study.

Huntly had the artist's temperament and loved to talk with me about his music. When musicians of real acquirements came to us, Huntly used to revel in meetings with them. Blind Boone, the pianist, came occasionally; and he and Huntly used to amuse themselves with a sort of a musical puzzle system. Each would play a selection, picking out passages supposed to be unfamiliar to the other, and ask the name of the composer. Once Huntly played a slow, stately largo movement with dainty little embellishments.

"That's Beethoven," said Blind Boone; "but what's it from?"

Huntly accelerated the movement, and it became *Yankee Doodle,* greatly to Boone's astonishment.

I have heard Huntly play this *Yankee Doodle* adaptation as a voluntary in church. I have heard him sing a Kyrie eleison in a perfectly angelic way, to his own accompaniment, as the people walked out of church. I feel sure they would have been shocked at this music had they known what it was. Among the things which were thought by Mr. Cliggitt to have interfered with my slavish devotion to that jealous mistress, the law, were the choir meetings I attended and the musical events in which I soon came to take part. They did cut into my evenings a bit.

This was the era of Gilbert and Sullivan. Mrs. James E. Moore, one of our musicians, undertook the presentation of *The Pirates of Penzance* with local talent. The rôle of Mabel went to Mrs. Moore, since she was a good soprano—and why else get the thing up? She found a tenor in C. B. Higgins, who did the Frederick part very well; and she managed to pick up people for the other solo parts. It was taken for granted that our best barytone, W. E. Ensign, would be The Pirate King; but Will began, rehearsed a few times and backed out. Every one thought it was because he was jealous of the prominence of Mabel and Frederick; but he took me aside and assured me that his real reason was that he couldn't mingle music with the comic. Give him an oratorio part, he said, and he was at home; but he was too stately for any pirate king.

"The fact is, Quick," he said, dropping his voice,

"folks think I'm stuck on myself, and stuck up; but I'm not. I act just the same way when I'm mowing the lawn or washing the buggy. I simply can't take this part."

So Mrs. Moore asked me to be the pirate king; and willing to try anything once, I consented. The thing went off—not my part, but the opera—with great success. We sang it and repeated it. And a year or so afterward it was staged again, and I went back from Sioux City to take my old part in it. We also sang *The Chimes of Normandy.* I have proof that my part was excellently well done, for Klinefelter so stated in his write-up of the event in the *Express-Republican.* He was still strong for his discovery, and any sort of a noise made by me would have gained recognition as great stuff in his paper.

We thought we did the *Pirates* mighty well; but I have sometimes been harassed by doubts. I remember a dress rehearsal just before we gave our first show. Back in the wings were two strangers who, I discovered, belonged to the theatrical profession. The sopranos and the policemen who did the bass parts were rehearsing their part of the full chorus which closes the first act. The pirates were for the moment off watch; and in my kingly robes I was leaning against one of the flies, listening to the remarks which our two professional visitors were making. They were impressed, I could see that; but there was something in the tempo which disturbed them. I now know that we sang it twice too slow. General Stanley's daughters were not "climbing over rocky mountains" half fast enough. And when the policemen "slapped their chests" and sang "Ta-ran-ta-ra," they failed to

put their clubs to their mouths as trumpets. The two members of the profesh looked at each other and grinned.

"Do you think we ought to tell her about it," asked one.

"No, for the love of heaven!" replied the other. "It would ruin 'em. They couldn't make the change at this late day—and, you know, some of it ain't so rotten!"

Rather considerate of them when one comes to think of it. I was somewhat disillusioned by this comment on our work. One experiences that feeling once one gets back of the scenes. When the flies were all run back on the stage of Parker's Opera House, the audience saw painted on the back wall of the stage a marine view, rather well done. It was a scene of green islands, waving palms and rocky shores. I had often admired what I took to be a sailboat represented as skimming across the bay, its sail dipping to a freshening breeze. But when, in my royal capacity, I went back to that wall, I was astonished to find that my white-winged yacht was nothing but a spot of plaster which had been knocked off by the awkwardness of some stage mechanic. The last touch of romance proved to be a bit of disrepair. That represents the difference between the view of the poor illuded occupant of a seat in the audience and the sophisticated one behind the scenes.

I have been away back behind the scenes in our national life since then; and I have noted many things in the highly exalted which to the public appeared as the finishing touches to a beautiful picture, but were to the one back on the stage merely marred spots in

the scenery. The generous heartiness of a great man turned out to be not much more than a rather good-hearted stupidity and carelessness. The intense devotion to the welfare of the people and to even-handed justice of another was on close inspection just a hole through the plaster of devotion to special interests. The inflexible rectitude of a third was largely obstinacy and self-esteem. The devotion to a great moral movement of another was a pose as far from the truth as the mark of the plank on the wall from the picture of a yacht. The deep knowledge of the law and the Spartan patriotism of another—as seen from the front—was intellectual denseness, lethargy and laziness. The public viewing the bad spots in the wall through the haze of distance and the mirage created by press, platform and pulpit, beholds every defect turned by our conventions in such cases to a perfection, every vice to a virtue. And the man who calls the hole in the wall by its true name soon finds how much more comfortable he would be if he cried, "Beautiful! Perfect!" with the rest.

Our opera company was largely recruited from the church choirs, and many of our beauties were members of the churches. Hence not a few of the best people were greatly scandalized. I think my friend Klinefelter was responsible for a part of this high tide of reproach. Kline said—not in his paper, but where it circulated just as far—that in his judgment, the Episcopalian ladies were the best dancers but the Methodists had the prettiest legs. Great heavens! To mention a portion of the human underpinning in this manner, and to have had the ocular basis for the remark, was something not to be endured—not in the

eighteen eighties. It is different now, very different indeed.

So great the departure from the norm of churchly behavior was this deed of enrolling in an opera company, rehearsing, actually dancing, and making possible such shocking comparisons among them as this of their dancing and one thing and another; and finally of presenting on the stage a profane piece like *The Pirates of Penzance,* so wrought upon the mind of the pastor of the Methodist church in which I was a humble choir member, that he prepared and preached a terrible sermon in which he condemned yieldings to worldly tendencies in scathing terms. He did not refer directly to the Pirates—he just scorched things so close to piracy that it hurt. I remember his text—and it was the text that most deeply harrowed up tender feelings; for while no one could say that it referred to anything of recent date, it had a swinging lash to it which hit everything and which was all the more cutting because of its apparent generality. It was Revelations 19:2: "For true and righteous are his judgments; for he hath judged the great whore which did corrupt the earth with her fornications, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand."

How could one discuss such a text as that? Clearly it was, as the diplomats say, outside the field of discussion. Professor Huntly, who had not had a rôle in the opera, because he said he was too old to make love, looked quizzically at the ladies of the choir who had given Kline the chance to make his ill-timed and his really improper jest. They blushed, more with indignation than anything else, and swept with stately dignity from the church in which they felt that they

Herbert Quick.

Herbert Quick, C. B. Higgins and Mrs. George Bowen.

THE PIRATES OF PENZANCE.

had received an insult which they could not resent. One offended young matron left before the services were over. It was not what the text actually meant; nobody stopped to anlyze the text; it was those awful words in it. I never heard any deliverance which could not be strictly construed to mean anything definite, or to be addressed to any one in particular, which made so distinct an impression. Several of our nicest members felt as if they had been called dreadful names. And this, I believe, is exactly the result which the minister wished to attain. How long ago this was!

As for me, I had no chips in the game. The pastor was not talking to me. I had already made for myself a position as a sort of free-lance, who did as he mighty well pleased, and laughed at criticism. I was on the whole rather titivated by the part I had taken. I had felt myself rising in the community out of my former obscurity. It is not every day that a principal of a ward school late from the country can become a pirate king, and have friends of the press to shield him from the criticism which no doubt he deserved.

CHAPTER XXXII

I WRITE SOME VERSES

A YOUNG man with the virus of the writing bug in his veins would not, as a matter of course, allow all this time to elapse without some manifestation of the disorder. I was still under the control of the inferiority complex of the West—that suppression of the spirit which made most of the output of the eastern writers imitations of the British, and of ours, servile copies of the older writers and of the Concord group. I could not see in our life any manageable material for literature. So my essays were related to ephemeral local matters, having to do mostly with politics and imitations of the poets. I tried some short stories in the realistic manner, but they did not show any effects of yeast. They were soggy, and I knew them for failures. I did parodies of Poe, Swinburne and other poets. I could make rhymes which weren't bad as parodies, and that with much facility. Harry Stanbery, of the Mason City *Times,* used to print these once in a while, all under pseudonyms. He would ask me for something and I would turn it out for him promptly. Finally came a time when I was able to do a great local stunt in the way of verse.

We had a business man named S. A. Sirrine who, as an influential member of the inside group of the Republican Party, began a campaign for a real political

career. He chose for his entering wedge the office of mayor of Mason City. I think without doubt that Jim Rule, who was as near a political boss as any one there then, promised him the office. There was a powerful revolt against the movement. The outsiders, and some close to the inner circle, bitterly opposed the notion of making Mr. Sirrine mayor, for they saw this as a step leading to Congress or to some high state office. There was a rumbling in the interior of the volcano. It culminated in such an earthquake as Mason City never saw before or since.

For a long time our city ticket had been nominated by what we called a people's caucus. The state law provided that municipal elections should be held in the spring so as to remove them from the influence of partisan campaigns in the fall. This was a concession to the feeling that city affairs should be run on a non-partisan basis; and our people's caucus, attended by all voters, was a local following of the same theory. The town had grown a good deal since this system had been adopted; but still the nominations were made at a single caucus for the whole municipality. Generally this gathering was not so large as to be unwieldy; but with public interest aroused, a town meeting for a place of some four thousand promised to be a throng.

The opponents of Sirrine besieged our office, endeavoring to induce Cliggitt to allow his name to go before the caucus for mayor; but he refused. The nomination of Sirrine was universally believed to be a movement to make our non-partisan caucus a part of the machine of the Republican ring, and Cliggitt was strongly opposed to this; but he would not depart

from his rule against running for office. Finally, though he was far from a popular figure, the anti-Sirrine group settled on Mr. Hughes, of the law firm of Glass & Hughes, as its candidate. This pleased the machine, for they thought Hughes an easy man to defeat. Sirrine's victory seemed assured. Klinefelter, Duncan Rule and others of my friends were for Hughes; and so far as I took any interest in the matter, I was with them.

Clearly our little city hall, where former caucuses had been held, would not contain the crowd; so it was called to meet in the county court-house. Surely this room would be large enough. But half an hour before time for calling the caucus to order the court room was crowded to the doors, and Jerry O'Rourke, one of our city council, had hard work to force himself into the court room far enough to enable him to be heard as he shouted that there were two hundred men outside who couldn't get in. Some one proposed that we adjourn to the armory a few rods away. This was done, and when I got to the huge room it was thronged with a milling mob of excited citizens.

The Sirrine people had the skill. A Hughes man nominated Cliggitt for chairman; but Mr. Card called attention to the fact that the call for the caucus should be first read; and when that was done, he placed Jim Rule in nomination for chairman. System prevailed against enthusiasm and Rule was elected.

A secretary was also chosen; and from that time until midnight, not a motion was passed. It was a tug of war. The strength of the sides seemed equal; or at least each side had the power to keep the other from doing anything. I have seen many unmanageable

Iowa has not always
smiled on her dreamers, her
poets, her children with the divine
fire in their souls. And yet I
know that if the artist born in Iowa
could only be allowed such a
life of the soul as would
impel him to respect his Iowa
materials, and to ponder
them long enough and
deeply enough, every element
of great art would be
found here.

Herbert Quick

Courtesy, State Historical Society of Iowa

A Page in Mr. Quick's Handwriting for *The Palimpsest* of Iowa City
August, 1923.

bodies in all sorts of political gatherings, from ward caucuses in cities to state and national conventions; but never the equal of this in noise, flamboyant exhibitions of individual effort, tense partisanship, temper and futility.

But the triumph of Jim Rule in getting the chairmanship was short-lived. His voice could not be heard a yard from him. The gavel was soon split. He seized D. M. Tiffany's heavy cane, and finding that he could make more noise with it by pounding the low ceiling than in any other way, he hammered the ceiling until he was weary—all to no effect.

The thing which made this affair so epochal for this community was the fact that most of our big men were in the fight. If New York were to have a caucus in which a thousand of her most prominent citizens should actually run wild, shout, push one another about, grow red in the face, sneer at one another, stamp, howl, and finally adjourn after three hours of chaos without having passed a motion or done a single thing for which they were convened, it would represent only a fraction of the interest of the people of Mason City in this aborted caucus. Somewhere about midnight it adjourned. Sirrine and Hughes were both placed on the ticket, and Hughes was elected. The machine had been beaten.

Now Klinefelter was confronted by the task of writing a report of this thing for his weekly paper. Clearly here was an opportunity for a great achievement in newspapering; but when Kline sat down to write it he was daunted by the job. He was worse than daunted—he was defeated. So he called me in counsel.

"You've got to help me write this up," said he. "Come down to the house and let's see what we can do with it. It's beyond me!"

It was beyond me too. We made several false starts; but the thing was too multifarious in details. There were no handholds by which to seize it. Finally, said Kline, "Why not put it in verse?" This rather appealed to me; so we divided the assignment into two parts. I was to handle the opening. He was to start in with the proceedings in the armory. Pretty soon I turned in a few pages of copy, beginning with *The Call,* which ran about as follows:

"On Saturday, March tenth, at seven-thirty,
At Courthouse, City Hall being small and dirty,
There will be held, if Providence don't balk us,
For this municipality a people's caucus.
Signed as secretary and call provider,
Your humble servitor—C. H. McNider."

The C. H. McNider who signed the call for this caucus as secretary is that well-known financier Charles H. McNider, now president of the First National Bank in Mason City, member of the Board of the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago, and one of the directors of the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Railway. He was then an employee of the bank at Mason City—assistant cashier, I believe. He is the father of Hanford McNider, the first head of the American Legion.

Not all the lines of the versified report of that memorable caucus were as bad as the ones I have quoted; but bad or good, they did for me what *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* did for Byron. I did not

awake the next morning to find myself famous. I was famous before the night of the day the *Express-Republican* appeared. The verses were intentionally mock-heroic, and unintentionally in the general style of *Marmion* or *The Lady of the Lake*. I. W. Card paid me the best compliment then received.

"I've nothing to say of the literary style," he said to me; "but as a feat of mere reporting—it's the best thing I ever saw."

Any one who will go back to that old two-page poem will find most of the men worth mentioning in Mason City then described in more or less absurd action.

It brought me into fraternal relations with one of our best-known citizens, H. A. Dyer—always called Doc. For Doc was, in his opinion, a poet. A few years before a girl had been drowned in Clear Lake. Doc was one of the people who dragged the water to recover her body; dragged all one afternoon and then waited until the next day to resume the sad task. While they were waiting for morning, Doc had felt moved to write a poem. It was published. The editor of the humorous department of *Harper's Magazine*—was it the *Editor's Drawer* or the *Easy-Chair?*—saw fit to reprint the poem with certain irreverent comments for the amusement of the elect of the world of culture. Two of the lines ran:

> "To-day we dragged the watery main;
> To-morrow we will drag again."

"Extreme agony and lack of space," observed the editor, "prevents further quotation."

Clearly, was the implication, this was one of the worst poems ever committed; but the implication never touched Doc Dyer. His masterpiece had been mentioned and in part quoted by *Harper's* and this was enough for him. The traveling men who registered at his hotel might make fun of his poem, his competitors at shooting matches might quote from the verses, or ribaldly misquote them; but what did they know of the divine ecstasy of poetic creation? None of those things moved him. He felt himself superior to these crass souls. He had touched the magic string; noisy fame was proud to win him; he was not doomed to die with all his music in him. He was a group all by himself; and when he found out that I had written the caucus piece, he came to welcome me into it. I was a kindred soul. He told me all about the crisis which had wrung the verses from him. He spoke of the sadness of that night when they waited for morning so that they might renew their efforts to find the poor girl's body. The wind, said he, came soughing through the trees; and he pronounced the word to rhyme with "bowing."

"The soughing wind," said he, "came singing its sad requiem through the trees, and I just couldn't sleep till I had written out my feelings. I'm glad that there's one man in this crowd here that can understand it. Here's a copy of mine." And he handed me a card on which the *Chant of Death* was printed. It is thus that *art* draws creative souls together.

In the summer of 1887 I had my first glimpse of a great city—Chicago. The National Teachers' Association held its annual convention there, and

the sleeping car on the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul train was pretty well filled with people taking advantage of the excursion rates to make a visit to the great metropolis of the West. I was one of the party, and in it were Klinefelter, Tom Miller, Art Sale, Judge Cummings and many more, both teachers and members of the laity. The sleeping car was a new thing to me. I remember that the extravagance of paying the porter a tip of a whole quarter impressed me as uncalled for, though I yielded to custom. Tom Miller invented several remarks attributed to me, the point of which was my verdancy.

"Did you hear what Quick said when he came into the city?" he asked so that all could hear. "He said, 'There's a house bigger than John West's. Why, Chicago's built up on both sides of the track!' "

This was an exaggeration; but the city was a great sight for me. The Iowa headquarters were in a hotel across the street north of the Palmer House. The street between was paved with Belgian-block pavement. All that first day I was dazed by the throngs; and Tom said they found me once standing in a doorway as if waiting for something. When they asked me what I was waiting for, he said I remarked that I had stopped to give the crowd a chance to get by! This also was a statement colored somewhat by the mentality of its author.

I went to bed late that first night and slept heavily after the wakefulness of the night before and the weariness of a day of excitement. As I slept I dreamed I was out in Iowa, and that a fearful storm had risen. I heard its roar in my ears, deafening me. Surely this was a tornado. I was terrified, I leaped

out of bed. The sun was shining in the window; but the roar went on. It was the thunder of traffic on the pavement outside. I crawled back into bed, but I slept no more; and I did not tell Tom or Cummings about my dream. They would have based a tradition on it.

Two inventions have mitigated the tornado which beat upon the sensorium of city dwellers then—the soft-tired motor-car and asphalt and concrete pavements; but still my dream proves what a revolution has taken place in the environment of a nation of country people, accustomed for ages to the stillness of the country-side, who have become city dwellers. The sounds of the city are only one element in this new world in which humanity has learned to live; but the noises alone mark a change from peace to a tornado. No wonder the neurologists have a busy life.

I never found out where the meetings of the National Teachers' Association took place. I began my career as a visitor to such gatherings, as I have in the main continued it, by ignoring the ostensible objects of them. I took my dip into the night life of the city. I rode in street-cars drawn swiftly along by horses and carrying one to the end of the line for a nickel. I stood on the shore of Lake Michigan and for the first time gazed out across water so broad as to form the horizon. And all the time I was filled with such a crowd of new impressions that they grew dim even as I looked and listened.

There was a landing for steamers then at the foot of Madison Street, at a place which is now nearly half a mile inshore from the lake. One evening an excursion for the Iowa delegation was planned. I

started for the landing, alone, I think, when I saw one fire engine after another dash off southward, their horses running madly, their gongs clanging. I forgot all about the excursion and followed the crowd to the fire. It was miles away, but its flares beckoned to us. It was in fact away down in the railway yards; but it was worth seeing. The great soap works of N. K. Fairbank & Co. were burning. It would be a great spectacle for me even now. The next day a member of the Chicago Fire Department told me that so large a proportion of the department had not been called out to any conflagration since the great fire.

To see the rushing streams of water turned to steam as they entered the flames, to see the great oil tanks heated one after another until they sent off huge clouds of black smoke, and then to see them burst into soaring beacons of flame, rising away above the surrounding buildings, laughing at the puny efforts of the firemen to control them—it was a marvelous sight. I feasted my rural eyes on it until it had begun to burn low and its spread was under control, and then went back to the hotel. I had seen something that none of the rest of the party had witnessed—an immense crowd at a Chicago fire, and one of the most spectacular conflagrations of the time.

One of our party was Jimmy Harding, a Mason City business man. He left us one day to meet a girl who was coming in from the East, and to see her safe across the city to her train, taking her on to Mason City. By the time I had returned she was there visiting her cousin, Mrs. George Brett; and there was I, all unconscious of the fact that my future wife's path was crossing mine on my first visit to Chicago. I

was conscious, however, of a stimulation within me of the contact with that modern marvel—the great city.

Nothing in an autobiography is more important than the marriage of the person writing it; yet it may easily prove less interesting to the reader than things of vastly less import. My father and mother were both unfortunate in their first marriages. It may be that we are constitutionally born short in the ability to choose mates; or possibly we are a difficult folk with whom to live. The latter theory has found some advocates. The fact that I have lived happily with my wife for some thirty-five years must be taken as a proof of her capacity to overlook faults and to make the best of what might easily have been a bad bargain—and that without ever betraying the fact that she has repented of it. I am sure that if she had half the faults of most wives I know, the alliance would have been a failure.

People who lived in Syracuse, New York, thirty-five to forty years ago may some of them remember a rather small, dark-haired young woman who sang in quartet choirs in the central churches, made funerals just what they should have been as to music, and was the mezzo-soprano in the Marsh Ladies' Quartet, which had a fine reputation in central New York. Her name was Ella Corey. It is now Ella Corey Quick. She is the party of the first part in the marriage above mentioned, and the girl escorted across Chicago by Jimmie Harding that day when I was taking in the sights on my first trip to a great city. She was seeing Iowa for the first time. When we were married I became an alumnus-in-law of the University of Syracuse, from which she had received

her degree. I got even with her last year, however, by having conferred upon me by the same institution the honorary degree of doctor of letters. Her last church work in Syracuse was that of soprano in the May Memorial Unitarian Church, of which that eminent divine, S. R. Calthrop, was pastor. The basso of this choir was E. N. Westcott, the author of *David Harum.* He was then, all unknown to the public, writing this phenomenally successful book, which did not appear until after we had gone to Sioux City; and, sadly enough, until just before Mr. Westcott's death. My wife has often told me that Westcott was in the habit of leaving the choir by a back way after the services were opened, and after a game of billiards in a club near by, returning for the music near the close—an eccentricity of genius with which I heartily sympathize.

The Sunday before our marriage, Mrs. Quick sang in this choir, with Anna Doll as alto, E. H. James as tenor, E. N. Westcott as bass and Grove L. Marsh as organist; and when the Unitarian services were over, went over to St. Paul's Episcopal Church to sing an Easter anthem solo. So, you see, Ella Corey was somebody in musical circles there.

All this, however, was long after our meeting, which took place in Mason City. I merely happened to be coming out of the post-office as Ella and her cousin, Mrs. Brett, were emerging. Mrs. Brett presented me and I was asked to call. I did so, with the results known to the world—and some not so known. I had never been invited by Mrs. Brett to call before. She had never presented me to any of her women friends. If I had not happened to meet them at that

particular time, I feel sure we should not have met at all. So much for fate or coincidence.

There lived in Chicago then a remarkable man in the field of music named C. E. Leslie. He composed much music, none of which, I believe, was worth much, and published many books of music. His chief work was that of stimulating a popular interest in music, and in this he was an extremely useful person. He earned a part of his income by organizing musical festivals in different parts of the western country; and when I met my future wife he was carrying on such an affair at Clear Lake, just ten miles west of Mason City, and already then the watering-place for the larger town.

Whether Leslie carried any musical staff with him I don't remember; but I think he built up his entire organization on the ground, trained his chorus locally, found his soloists wherever he could, and was remunerated by the series of concerts which ended the festival. He discovered that in Ella Corey there was visiting in Mason City a lady who could sing, and induced her to appear as a soloist at one of his concerts. I happened to be at Clear Lake that day and heard her. She had a remarkably beautiful mezzo-soprano voice, which she used in rendering music which called for no staccato work or other stunts. It was one of those solos which was admired by the hearers just in proportion to their knowledge of and love for music. I had much more of the latter than the former; but I was impressed—much more so than by anything in our acquaintance up to this time. So when we both returned to Mason City I gave myself the privilege of becoming better acquainted.

June 15, 1880.

November 25, 1887.

About 1877.

Ella Corey Quick.

The next Sunday I took her to the First Methodist Church, where Professor Huntly had asked her to sing a solo. She sang that very simple, pathetically sweet song by Blake, *After Toiling Cometh Rest.* As I waited for her at the front of the church, Huntly said in my ear, "That's the best done of anything ever sung in this church." All these things constituted little fillips to an interest that grew so long as she remained with us, which was only a few weeks; which resulted in a correspondence, and finally, after many months, in a visit on my part to her home in Syracuse; and then in marriage. And marriage is, of course, the beginning of the story, in real life, and not the end, as it used to be in the story books. We haven't reached that part of it yet. I must get myself admitted to the bar and make myself a nook in some law office somewhere before that.

There was nothing, by the way, in my own amateur and crude musical activities which brought us together. Fortunately for my standing with her, I had not yet shot like a comet athwart the musical sky of Mason City. I could never have satisfied her critical musical taste. After we were married, of course, she had to make the best of my singing—as of many other eccentricities and weaknesses.

CHAPTER XXXIII

I LOSE A GAME

Life sweeps down upon the young man like a wave. He must either turn his back to it, plunge boldly into it—or be swept away by it. He may turn its seismic power to his own advantage, or merely allow it to roar by as he clears his eyes; or he may be upset by it. If he endeavors to use its might, he may commit all sorts of errors; for he is always meeting it for the first time. Fortunately, if he makes bad work of one wave, there will always be others; each of which may be an opportunity or a disaster or neither; with which he may make a mess of things—or succeed.

In the late 'eighties I began to feel that my crucial struggle was on with this tide of existence. So I plunged in. I was not altogether wedded to the law as a career. I was taking to it because it seemed to be the most convenient course. An acquaintance of mine, D. W. Walker, was at that time conducting a system of educational magazines at Charles City, in the next county east of Mason City. He was a good business man, and his publications were prosperous and seemed to promise greater prosperity. He said there was work in this business for a good writer on educational themes and suggested that I join him. I forget just what the financial inducements were; but I thought so well of it that I wrote him a letter which

I considered an acceptance of his proposal. I thought of myself as leaving the law and becoming an editor. I expected a letter from him asking me to come on to Charles City, but never received it. I was a little offended at what I considered his change of mind.

Many years after, Mr. Walker came to Sioux City on affairs connected with the excursion business which he was very successfully conducting for one of our railways. My acquaintance with him was renewed. One day, just to answer a question which my mind had so long been asking, I spoke of our old negotiations and asked him what had changed his mind.

"Nothing changed it," said he, in a tone which showed that he, too, had been not altogether satisfied with the way our negotiations had terminated. "I told you what I'd do and you accepted. I looked for you for a while to come and go to work, and then concluded you had changed your mind. There was nothing for me to write you. It was up to you to come on and get on the job."

Now here was another watershed of circumstance. If I had understood that we had what the law calls a meeting of minds, I should have gone over to Charles City and become a citizen of that prosperous town. I should never have met my wife. I should probably never have been admitted to the bar. I should have been embarked in editorial work. Nothing would have been the same, if Walker had used some different word in his letter or I had fully understood what he wrote. As it was, I went on with my law studies and confronted the time when I should open an office somewhere and begin the long waiting for clients.

I envied Duncan Rule. He had had three terms as clerk of the court and had been able to buy a house and support a family, take a prominent place in society and in affairs; and when his term of office ended, all he had to do was to take his bar examination at Des Moines and walk into the office of John Cliggitt, in which I was studying, and become a partner in the firm of Cliggitt & Rule. He was established. His problem of getting a start was solved. Then the idea occurred to me that I might become his successor in the clerk's office. I, too, might have four or six years as clerk, with all the honors and emoluments—which then seemed very great to me—and I, too, might at the end of this time have some opening ready, leading right into a practise. Why not? I was well known in the county. I knew all the insiders in county politics. It looked as if I might easily put the thing across—or if not easily, success appeared probable. It would cost some money to make a campaign; for here I was not taking a flyer in a strange county as I had done with that rather absurd matter of my gesture toward the county superintendency in Kossuth County. This, if I entered the campaign, was to be a real effort with the prospect of success.

I talked with my nearest friends—Klinefelter, Duncan Rule, Tom Miller, Charley McNider, Jim Blythe and others. They said they would stand by me if I ran for the office; but had I talked to Jim Rule? I had not; but I expected to do so. He was a friend of mine. He had put me in my principalship in the schools. Well, said they, I had better speak to him. It was early, and no other candidate had appeared.

Better get to Jim Rule as soon as possible, and tie him up before any one else did. So with a good deal of trepidation, I spoke to Jim Rule, the man who had more to say about our politics than any one else. He was a very handsome, distinguished, dark-bearded man, with sparkling black eyes, which twinkled a friendly twinkle as I told him of my ambition to serve the people as clerk of the courts when his brother Duncan Rule should vacate the office.

"Why," said he, with no hesitation, "I think that would be a fine thing. It would be a fine thing for the office, a fine thing for the people and a fine thing for you. I am for it. I don't want to be quoted; but you go right on and build your fences. It looks to me as though you're as good as nominated. Success to you!"

We shook hands on it as I thanked him. I went forth, as I left him, more in the possession of a real definite hope than I had ever been in my life. With the men back of me who had enrolled in my forces in Mason City, I had every prospect of carrying the town, which dominated the county. And I had another advantage. I was a country boy. I could appeal to the rural townships as one who had worked on the farm among them and taught in their rural schools.

I felt certain of carrying all the north, the east and the south precincts of the county. Mr. W. A. Burnap, of Clear Lake, became a candidate; but after conceding to him a block of votes in the west, I could count upon coming into the convention with more than half the votes, not counting on Mason City—and who could take Mason City from me? No

one seemed disposed to try. This was no pipe dream which possessed me. I had a solid basis for my hope. I was no novice in local politics. I knew the wires, and how to pull them. I had good sincere advisers, who knew the ropes. I felt that I was now about to establish myself in a position which would fix me for life, if I had any ability; and I never for a moment doubted that I had the ability. So I went about the county interviewing the men of influence, looking after the attendance at the caucuses, talking with as many people as possible. I worked day and night. I drove myself at such a pace that when I tried to sleep my heart or nerves played me strange tricks; and I used to awake with the feeling that I was smothering, and would rush to a window for air. I did not allow myself to rest in confidence that the influential men of the county would put my candidacy over to success. I took the parts of the machine which looked useful and then I built my own machine. I had too much at stake to take any chances.

Then the word came to me that I had a competitor in the field in the person of Absalom Gale, a bright young man who had taken little interest in politics theretofore and who looked like an easy man to defeat, had it not been for one thing. He was a brother-in-law to Jim Rule. I felt a sense of danger in this. I talked to my friends about it.

"Ab Gale's a nice enough fellow," said they, "but where's his strength? The Gales are strong in the Methodist Church; but he can't command half the strength in that. Jim Rule's for you, even if Ab is his brother-in-law. You go right on the way you're going and we'll take care of Mason City for you. Ab

hasn't a ghost of a show outside the city. Just you keep at work; you're all right."

But thinking of the predicament of a man whose wife's brother is asking for help, I was uneasy in my mind as to Mr. Rule's position. So I went to him and talked about Absalom's candidacy.

"I advised him not to go into this," said Jim, "and he has no claim on me for a particle of support. His candidacy makes no difference with my attitude. He won't get far. Go right on with your campaign and don't worry about any change on my part. You're all right, Quick."

I couldn't see that Gale was making any headway anywhere, especially in the country precincts. There was some evidence of support for him in the city; but even this sign didn't seem important. Township after township instructed delegations for me in the rural districts. Some of them, to be sure, also gave instructions for candidates for other offices. W. A. Peedan, of Rockwell, who was a candidate for recorder, was getting some instructions in the same delegations which instructed for me; but such things were to be expected. Finally the time came for the Mason City caucus. If I won there, I should be nominated on the first ballot. If I lost, nobody would have a majority and it would be a real convention fight.

A day or so before the Mason City caucus, Jim Rule stopped me on the street.

"I'm in a difficult position," said he. "You know Ab is my brother-in-law, and it's going to be hard for me to come out actively for you as against him."

"Well," said I, "I don't ask you to do anything

that will embarrass you. If it will do that to be active in my support, why I'll release you from any obligation to work for me."

"Thank you," said he. "I won't do a thing for Ab, but I'll have to lie low as to you. I promise you I won't do anything to hurt you."

"What do you suppose this talk means?" I asked at the first opportunity of Duncan Rule, his brother.

"I think," said Dunc, "that Jim is against you, and for Ab. If he goes his length, it's going to be a job to carry this town against him. He's the president of the City National Bank, and he has been in the habit of having his own way in town politics. I think we can put you over; but work, my boy, work!"

Of course, this sort of thing is an old story in politics. It was an old story to me then, for I was no tenderfoot in the game. There was some advantage to me in the feeling which began to pervade our little political world that Jim Rule was turning against Quick and trying to put his brother-in-law in the clerk's office. For Jim had his political enemies. I think that Charley McNider, for instance, who was in the bank across the street, was spurred to greater activity for me by the feeling that maybe here was a chance to get Jim Rule's scalp. There is almost always a bank across the street.

This advantage, however, was in no way equal to my loss when Jim was forced out into the open in support of Gale, as he eventually was. My friends made the fight so hot that he saw he had no prospect of winning without showing his hand. When the Mason City caucus met every one knew what a struggle was on between the Rule and the anti-Rule forces,

with Ab Gale the candidate for the former and myself of the latter.

I remember that each side had its printed ticket for delegates to the county convention. As I remember the facts, the caucus met in the armory to which the city caucus had adjourned to give me the theme for two or three cantos of poetry in the Hughes-Sirrine contest. I have one of my tickets before me. On it are the names of ten old friends which call up a throng of memories: Doctor J. B. Dakin, a prominent physician, who I have recently found out was an uncle to my friend Negley D. Cochrane of the Scripps newspaper organization, and of R. H. Cochrane of the Universal Films Corporation; A. T. Parker, the owner of Parker's Mills; D. J. Stewart an active and esteemed business man; John S. Stanbery, the partner of Judge J. J. Clark; John West, who lived in the big house the rival of which Tom Miller said I had been surprised to see in Chicago; Henry M. Baker, a good friend among the Milwaukee railway men; George L. Herrick, a pioneer hardware man, and the possessor of the finest beard and one of the best hearts in Iowa; F. M. Rogers, a merchant known of as many people as any business man there, and universally esteemed; A. H. Cummings, the only lawyer on my ticket, a personal friend of mine still, and the man who dubbed me "Klinefelter's Discovery"; and Win Tompkins, long in the office of county treasurer. It was as good a roster of ten as any candidate ever had to stand for him, and looked like a very hard ticket to defeat in those days. But it was defeated. We had our tickets passed around the hall and the men filed past a ballot box and voted. Then the bal-

loting was closed and the votes were taken out one by one and counted.

I stood by Judge Cummings, who sat by the box and scrutinized the ballots as they came out. We were a little ahead when I found an opportunity to ask him how he thought it was going.

"I think we're done!" said he.

I was not ready to believe it; but by a few votes, done we were. Ab Gale and Jim Rule had carried Mason City. This gave him ten votes in the convention; and news came in before we had adjourned that the same forces which had given him the Mason City delegation had won for him in what we called outside Mason, which was the township outside the city. This made thirteen votes which I had fully expected to have of a total of fifty-one. Yet so strong was my vote in the rest of the county that I went into the convention very hopeful still. My spirits rose to the conflict. I was not beaten by a darned sight!

The convention assembled at the court-house on October sixth—the month I was twenty-seven years old. I can yet see that gathering of well-dressed men from the city and farmers in their Sunday suits. I can feel the tension as the roll was called on nominations for clerk. I noted with anxiety the vote for Gale of some delegations instructed for me; all from localities which had been controlled as to personnel by Will Peedan for recorder. It took no diagram to prove that the astute Jim Rule had made a trade with the Peedan forces. They were to nominate Gale and the Gale forces were to nominate Peedan.

But the deal was not yet in sight of success; I had seventeen votes to his twenty. Burnap had fourteen.

My small shortage of votes in that Mason City caucus had kept me from winning on the first ballot with twenty-seven votes to Burnap's fourteen. A fateful lack for me.

Gale must have been elated at his strength on this first ballot. He had traded his ten votes in Mason City for another ten which would otherwise have been for me, and thus had twenty, and led in the balloting. The history of the convention thereafter shows, I believe, that I had welded together a pretty good machine—for the body of my delegates stuck. Ordinarily in a county convention, the second or third ballot was expected to settle the nomination. Not here, however. Ballot after ballot was taken. Outside of trading stock, the strength of the three of us stood, I think it is fair to say, at Gale thirteen, Burnap fourteen, Quick fourteen. Sometimes Gale's vote ran up to twenty-five—within one vote of nominating him; but whenever there was any danger of this it dropped back to twenty-three—his real strength of thirteen plus the ten he had traded for. It was breath-taking for me, as the balloting droned on and on, until the sun sank low and the court-room began to grow dark.

Then Gale came to me and asked for a conference. I went into the jury-room, just off the court-room. He proposed that something be done to break the deadlock. The convention had balloted one hundred and thirty-nine times.

"Well," said I, "I'm ready to break the deadlock in any way that will give me the nomination."

"Why," said he, with an attempt at a laugh, "that isn't reasonable."

"I'll be reasonable then," said I, "I'll flip a coin with you or draw straws to see who has the office."

"No," said he, "that isn't reasonable, either. I'm within a vote or so of the nomination. But we can fix it so that sometime in the future you can have something."

Thus was dangled before me the bait which has wrecked so many lives on the reef of chronic office-seeking. I could see myself accepting this offer of "something in the future," hanging about from year to year, denied from time to time, and gradually sinking to the position of a political cast-off of the Jim Rule machine. I laughed in Ab's face.

"You talk as if you would have things to give!" I taunted. "I think you're mistaken about that. And this office is the last thing I shall ask of this county. And mark my words, if you don't accept my proposition to settle this in a way that gives me an even chance with you, somebody will be nominated on the next ballot—and it won't be Ab Gale!"

Without another word, he turned and walked back into the convention. I followed him. The next ballot nominated W. A. Burnap of Clear Lake. My friend Tom Miller had something to do with this result. He had been defeated two years before in his efforts to be nominated county superintendent. The Gale forces had been largely responsible for his defeat. And now, as I released my delegates from their allegiance to me, Tom got even by turning them over to Burnap.

"One by one the roses fall!" sang Tom as he counted up the scalps he had taken for his defeat, adding Ab Gale's to the string.

I was defeated, though one delegation from Mount

Vernon Township refused to vote for any one else even after I had released them. But Jim Rule was defeated too. I think I am correct in saying that this defeat marked the end of his domination in the politics of that region. He and I were always good friends afterward. Ab Gale was a fine chap and did nothing to defeat me that I should not have done if I could to beat him. He went into banking, became a bank president and one of the important men in northern Iowa. He was ever a friend to my sisters, who continued to live in Mason City. We were always friendly, after that first bitterness wore away.

This convention is a very good example of the sort of trading and trickery which finally damned the caucus and convention system. We now have the primary system. It has not altogether met the expectation of people like myself, who labored for its establishment. It was expected to equalize political opportunity to some extent, as between men of money and those without. Yet under the primary system the wealthy candidate has as much advantage over the poor one, as before.

The caucus and convention system is a sort of soviet plan. The soviet system is usually associated with Communism, but it is really only a system of elections which might be capitalistic, oligarchic, theocratic or plutocratic. It consists in a plan of successive elections of representatives from lower bodies up to higher ones. In Russia these groups are industrial—mainly carefully hand-picked labor unions. They could be churches or social classes, or arbitrary groups. The distinctive feature of them lies in the fact that lower groups, however constituted, elect rep-

resentatives to act in higher bodies, these in turn electing representatives of representatives for elections farther up. In the caucus and convention system we held our local caucuses which chose delegates to county conventions, which in turn chose delegates to state or congressional conventions, and state gatherings elected delegates to national conventions. Fundamentally this had a good deal of resemblance to the soviet system. The direct primary is more democratic.

We have lost something and gained something by the change. I feel sure that while political action now is far from accurate in representing the will of the people—because in most matters the people have no will to exercise, and for other reasons—we have lost something in the average ability of our political bodies. Select groups of men naturally tended to choose abler men than the democratic methods of to-day are likely to fix upon. But this greater ability was not used with as much care for the public interest as the public sees it. Special interests had a better chance to dominate the men chosen by the old system. On the whole, the change has been from public officers with great ability, acting for selfish objects of their own and of other influential classes, to men of smaller powers mainly devoted to better purposes.

There are more exceptions to this rule than are needed to prove it. Some of the most pitiful failures ever seen in public life were lifted to high positions by the caucus and convention system, and many men of great ability are chosen by the primary system. Our present plan sometimes picks representatives of selfish interests quite opposed to the public weal, and

under the old plan we elected many whose devotion to the public interest was pure and shining. On the whole, however, I believe the strong points and the weak spots in the two plans are as I have tried to indicate. I would not go back to the caucus and convention system; but I wish the direct-primary plan could be improved. The improvement indicated is, of course, a more intelligent interest in public affairs on the part of the voters. I am afraid we shall have to stumble and blunder along as we have done in the past for quite some time yet.

When this convention was over I do not remember that I was very much depressed. To be sure, my high hopes for an immediate place in the world were dashed to the ground. I had spent all my savings for the expenses of traveling about the county, but they never had amounted to much anyhow. I had had a most interesting and valuable experience. And I was inured to seeing my best plans defeated and my dreams dissolved down to their cloudy foundations. It had happened so often.

I resolved that henceforth I would make such plans only as could be carried out by my own abilities, such as they were. I had shrunk from the prospect of the years of waiting and maybe wanting while a law practise came to me; but there seemed no way now of avoiding or evading the ordeal. So I went back to John Cliggitt's office, dusted off the neglected law books and recommenced the perusual of the romance of torts, choses in action, *res judicata, stare decisis,* and the rest of it. There was little tang in it after the excitement of that darkening court-room with its nearly one hundred and fifty ballots, and the

thrill of rejecting Ab Gale's proposal for putting me off on his own terms. But how I wished I could have had the sensation of flipping a coin with him—he might have had to furnish the coin—with my whole future at stake! That would have been a game worth the candle.

CHAPTER XXXIV

I PASS MY EXAMINATIONS

My plans for devoting myself to the public service having met disaster, I went back to my school and my devotions to that jealous mistress, the law. I really studied hard now, for next spring Duncan Rule was going down to Des Moines to take his examination for admission to the bar, and as I had already spent more than the time required by the law, I planned to accompany him and take mine at the same time.

I was conscious of a certain dimness in my mind as to the subjects I had first read, and adopted a plan for a general review. I went over the alphabetically arranged topics in *Wait's Actions and Defenses at Law and In Equity* from beginning to end. When, as I faced the black-lettered title of any topic it struck me like the familiar face of an old acquaintance, I skipped it. When the outlines were dim, or my mind was a blank, I studied the article, and followed it up by a reading of the Iowa decisions cited under it, and any sections of the *Iowa Statutes* cited in the decisions. Sometimes a quarter of a page in the *Actions and Defenses* would require a week of my time running it out to the end; for if truth be a seamless web, the law is an endless one.

My good, honest, serious preceptor, Mr. Cliggitt—whose precepts, if few, were always sound—was evidently doubtful as to my past devotion to the jealous

mistress. He was called upon to certify that I had faithfully pursued my course of study; and though the length of time I had been on its trail had been sufficient to satisfy the law, I could not claim that my reading had been anything like uninterrupted.

"I don't know," said he, when I mentioned the certificate to him. "There have been a good many temptations to which you have yielded. Of course, we expected that you would do your school work; but operas, choir meetings, excursions, politics and this, that and the other have cut into your evenings a lot. Some doubt, Quick, as to whether I can conscientiously give you the certificate."

I didn't argue the matter. I just looked mournful and turned away. The fact is, though I had read more than he had observed, he had a good basis for his doubts. I was relieved therefore when, after a few days' consideration, he handed me the certificate stating that I had pursued the course of study in his office required by law. Armed with this and what knowledge I had acquired, I went with Duncan to Des Moines. Mrs. Rule went with us, accompanied by her sister, Miss Addie Thompson.

On the way back we went to Colfax, already a considerable watering-place. I took some embarrassed pride in the fact that there grew up about the place a rumor that Addie and I were the first of the spring crop of bridal couples. It was now nearly two years since the event of my meeting the girl from Syracuse; but I had not seen her and no understanding had been arrived at between us. The journey with Miss Thompson was a sort of dress rehearsal for a wedding tour. I think we both rather enjoyed the joke.

When we reached Des Moines we were informed that the examinations would begin the next day at one P. M. The class taking the examinations consisted largely of students from Drake University or Coe College, I do not remember which. They organized a quiz class as a sort of warming up for the next day. A quiz class was a new thing to me. Duncan and I sat in. As I noted their apparent familiarity with everything legal, their quick responses to the questions and their fluent use of the legal patter in which their recitations had trained them, my spirits fell. Surely, said I to myself, I am far from being as ready for the test as are these boys. They know more law than I do. I shall fail! Cliggitt was right!

However, there was no use in worrying, so our little party spent the next forenoon seeing the sights, and at one o'clock Duncan and I strolled into the room where the written examination was to be held. Our young legal geniuses and the rest of the candidates were already hard at work. They had been at it, we were informed, since eight o'clock that morning. A change of which we had not been informed had been made in the hour of starting in. We had only five short hours for the work which was supposed to take all day! While we had been loafing, the others had been at work. Horrors!

I never have done a harder afternoon's work than that. If my prospect with the full quota of time was as bad as I had feared, what chance had I when the time was cut in half? Nevertheless, after a few moments of panic, I worked steadily and with all the intensity I could command, and turned in my last question at a little past six. It was a form of

indictment for some crime or other. I was fearful that it was something itself in the nature of a crime.

Next morning we went before the supreme court of the state for an oral examination conducted partly by the attorney general and partly by the justices themselves. We sat about that room in which we all hoped soon to appear as counsel, facing the imposing gentlemen of our court of last resort, now rather timid sufferers under our first trials there. Questions were put. I have no memory of any of them but one. This was solemnly propounded by Chief Justice Rothrock, as I remember it.

"Gentlemen," said he, "let each of you suppose that when you open your law office a client appears and states the following case to you." And then he went on to outline a dreadful problem in the law of real property. It involved a conflict between state and federal law. It comprised a construction of the law as to a puzzling set of facts, with federal land grants and state land grants overlapping. It included a doubtful service of notice by publication. It had about everything in it to set lawyers and judges by the ears. It was in fact a statement of an Iowa *cause célèbre* then before this same supreme court, and one on which these very judges had several opinions. Judge Rothrock was asking us to decide on the spur of the moment the most complex of the celebrated Des Moines River land cases, which filled the courts for years, had called for the conflicting decisions in the land department at Washington and finally vexed Congress with bills for the relief of plundered settlers.

One hapless candidate for admission after another

was called upon to answer, and one after another was bowled over by it. I sank lower in my chair for concealment, for I felt that if this were the riddle of the sphinx, that was my day for destruction. I knew no more than the dead the answer to the question.

I cowered down in vain, for Judge Rothrock looked at his list and said, "What would you advise a client in this case, Mr. Quick?"

"I should find out, Your Honor," said I, after pulling myself to my feet, "how much time I could have to study the question and ask him to come back for his answer."

Judge Rothrock and one or two other justices applauded. A ripple of applause ran about the room.

"That's exactly the answer I should give in such a case," said he. "It is the only safe position for any lawyer to take, no matter how profound he might be."

I had answered in all sincerity, and with no idea but that of getting out of a bad hole; but it impressed the other boys in the class as a very acute bit of work on my part. Some of them congratulated me afterward. A friend of mine who was employed in the office of Attorney General Stone at the time said to me afterward that Mr. Stone told him that I had passed the examination with the highest score of any candidate in the class; but I would be willing to wager that he based his judgment on that one answer rather than on a full examination of my papers. However that may be, I went home carrying in my pocket a certificate permitting me to practise law in Iowa.

I may add here that I never in my life was called upon to show this certificate. I went to Sioux City in time, entered upon the practise, was active in the

courts for a good part of twenty years; and so far as I know, no court ever took the pains to see whether I was a licensed practitioner or not. I think I could have gone there quite unadmitted and done the same thing, if I had dared. In all my experience at the bar, I never knew of a lawyer being called upon to prove his admission.

I practised in Minnesota, Nebraska, South Dakota and in many counties of these states, as well as in Iowa, and in every court I could have gone in with my cases without question. Whether this connotes a deserved confidence on the part of the courts in the men appearing before them and claiming to be lawyers, or laxness on their part, or a feeling that it makes little difference whether a man has a license to practise or not, I do not venture to guess. A profession is only a form of labor union, anyhow; and our courts seemed to act on the open-shop principle, though I never heard of their confidence being abused.

I was glad to show my certificate of admission to Mr. Cliggitt, you may be sure, and to plan for getting to his ears what Attorney General Stone had said of my examination. I wanted to relieve him of such doubts as he might have harbored as to my devotion to the jealous mistress.

As a matter of fact, I have the sort of mind which is sure to make good in the law so far as examinations are concerned. I have a retentive memory and the ability to draw distinctions. Many minds of very mediocre capacity have these qualities in a high state of development. A man may be an excellent lawyer without having a very high type of mind; but he must have a good memory and the logical faculty of draw-

ing distinctions. And these two faculties lie at the base of most great intellects. One can imagine greatness without them in certain fields. I suspect that Richard Wagner was lacking in them. But he worked with instinct rather than reason. It may be urged with much force that no man can be a great lawyer unless he possesses most of the elements of a great mind. He may have these and still fall far short of being a great man. Whether he is or not will depend on the difference in the meaning of the words "most" and "all" or "nearly all."

After some experience in the law business, I began to see that my answer to Judge Rothrock was not one which experimentally covered the ground. In the matter of getting time for the legal mind to consider the case and make a guess at the law, it was correct; but it was a bad answer for the mind of the client; and the man who expects to make a living in the law must always have in view the impression he is making on the client's mind. No, my bald statement that I should take time to study the case would have been an unwise one. What I should have said I would do was something like this:

"First, I should look as profound as possible, and drop a few remarks about the similarity of this to other cases in which I had been retained. I should spend some time in looking over his papers, if he had brought any; and if he had not, I should ask him to bring them in. This would in itself give me time. If he brought them in, I should do a little prating as to the necessity for more papers and the need of looking at the records themselves, thus getting more time. I should grow indignant at the almost criminal nature

of the attack on his rights and say that if there is any truth in the statement that a court of equity seeks the very right of the cause, there could be no doubt of our success. I should say 'our' as often as possible so as to identify myself with him and his interests. For a client warms to the lawyer who grows hot in his partisanship. Many a client would rather lose in a bitterly fought trial in which his lawyer takes the hide off his opponent and the counsel on the other side, than to win through subtlety and by gentle methods.

"I should thus fill my client with confidence in my devotion to his cause and with hope for success. And I should never, never hint to him that the law was anything but clear to me. All my delays would be ostensibly based on a desire to get all the facts. While thus stalling, as I believe some people call it, I should delve deeply into the law, and thus prepare gracefully to back out of the matter if I found the authorities strongly against me. But at that first interview I should strive to convince the client that my heart was with him, and that I knew the law, whether I did or not."

On this answer I should have deserved applause from a gathering of practical legal minds. I could not have told Judge Rothrock what I really should have done after I had studied the case so far as to develop its real questions in my mind, because all that came to pass afterward. I should, however, before giving my client his answer, have strolled across the hall some day and talked to Colonel J. H. Swan about it. He was the best real-property lawyer I ever knew. He would have looked up at me over his spectacles,

Mr. Quick, at Extreme Left, and a Group of Friends. Taken at Mason City, Iowa, in the Late 'Eighties.

thrown his Lincolnian legs over the table, with his feet dangling clear over on the other side, and given me—just as a kindly favor to a young fellow—more real vital law in a few minutes than I should have been able to find in the books. He would have had it coordinated. Having found him in agreement, or after taking his views into account in the reexamination of my case, I should have advised my client with as much confidence as could be possible in such a case. Confidence in what? Merely that if I were puzzled, the counsel on the other side would be equally perplexed. Isn't that confidence enough? What are courts for except to make the last guess?

Some reader will say that I should have told the chief justice that I should exact a retainer from the client first. Theoretically, this seems vital; but in all my career as a lawyer, I don't remember ever to have received a retainer. Retainers were things of which we read in books; but we did not receive them from the common run-of-mine client. We were glad to get our fees after we had earned them. A lawyer acquaintance of mine in Sioux Falls once did get a windfall retainer; but that was from a rich gentleman from the East who knew no better, who was there getting a divorce at the time when Sioux Falls ran a great divorce mill.

My friend, whose name I shall not mention, was a briefless young lawyer whose money was exhausted and who was about to abandon the town, and probably the profession, a failure. On the train one day he fell into conversation with a traveler who asked him about the hotels in Sioux Falls. The young man was very courteous and seemed to make a good impression. As

they parted, the stranger asked for his card. Within a day or so he turned up at the law office and stated his case. He was seeking a divorce and would like to have his new acquaintance represent him.

Now nothing was much simpler than a divorce case there at that time; and the facts were soon jotted down, the advice as to residence given and all was prepared for lapse of the rather short time required.

"And now," said the stranger, transformed into the sole client of the office, "it is only proper to give you a retainer. I should be glad to know what sum would be correct."

"Oh," said my friend, "I'll leave all that to you. There will be some small expenses, filing fees and the like, but they are not heavy."

As the client sat down with his check-book, his counsel hoped for a hundred dollars; but he would have been satisfied with twenty-five. I think he is entitled to great credit for not asking whether a mistake had been made when he was given a check for two thousand. This showed that he had the real stuff in him, which has since made him a prominent figure in his state. It was a life buoy thrown to a man going down for the third time; but he took it with those thanks only which good business manners called for from a man accustomed to such retainers.

Time passed. Its lapse finally gave the client his divorce. As he rose to bid the young lawyer good-by he asked for his statement of account. Now the young man had already been paid five times the fee with which he would have been satisfied, and he really did not have the nerve to ask for more.

"Well," said he, "I think I'll leave that to you."

The client drew another check—this time for four thousand dollars, making a cold six thousand for the fee. It put our friend on his feet and closed the era of his hanging on by his eyebrows. Such things never came to me, however. And my experience in the law offices of my friends had already so far destroyed the retainer myth in my mind that I could not have been expected to think of it in my examination.

So here I was all dressed up in my new diploma and no place to go. I began casting about for a location. Somehow I came to have a correspondence with a lawyer named Rosenberger at Muscatine, and almost determined to go there. My friend Judge Sherwin took an interest in finding an opening for me, and interceded with a law firm at Allison, Iowa, down next to my own native county of Grundy. Win C. Tompkins, our county treasurer and a man of influence, thought I could do well at Clear Lake, and promised me that if I would open an office there his bank would throw all the business possible to me. Any of these connections might have done quite as well as the one I finally chose, and they show that I had some good friends.

But when a young man has identified himself with a certain calling as I had with teaching, for ten years, beginning at the age of sixteen, the leaving of it is a wrench. Even after I was admitted, I kept on teaching for a year. The inertia of status held me; I had no money. I still answered the bell at eight o'clock in the morning and went back to my schoolroom on the South Side. Another call, however, filled me with an urge to heed the bell no longer, but to break loose

from a profession in which that barrier of lack of full equipment stood in the way of advancement. I could not see myself proposing marriage to any woman until I was, potentially, something more than a grade teacher—or any teacher for that matter; and such a proposal was in my mind.

I began to speak to my friends of a desire to see the East. My pretext was to visit my friend Dick Montague, who had left Mason City and was in the legal department of a mortgage company which had taken him first to Kansas City and then to New York. Some of my friends wondered, I think, why I was so keen to see Dick. We had been good friends, to be sure; but there had been months and months in the past when I had been able to endure a separation from Dick with perfect fortitude. I did not confide to them that I longed to mingle in musical circles in New York—not in the city, but in central New York. To be exact, in Syracuse, where lived the young lady whom I had met several times two years before, and who had sung *After Toiling Cometh Rest* at the Methodist Church that Sunday.

I was now free to desert the jealous mistress of the law, so far as systematic reading was concerned, and to devote myself to another. I made a gesture of practise in Mason City; I had letter-heads printed on which appeared "J. H. Quick, Attorney at Law." I had some business intrusted to me—all of it bills of dead beats which I made strenuous efforts to collect. If I collected any, save a few delinquent taxes, which Judge Cummings put into my hands, I have forgotten them. I recognized this effort as not even a beginning, and I decided to leave Mason City; so there was

nothing to prevent me from pursuing a musical career for a few weeks. I broke across the mystic line dividing the East from the West at Chicago and invaded the Atlantic Seaboard.

On my way I dropped into a place on Michigan Avenue in Chicago which bore some sign showing it to be an art gallery. It was the collection now grown to the occupancy of that beautiful palace on the lake front. It seemed to me the most wonderful collection of objects of art in the world. I spent hours there, feeling a return of those thrills which had moved me so long ago when as a boy I had read the art essays in my old copy of *Harper's Magazine*. A rusty-looking elderly German answered a question I ventured to ask, and then devoted the afternoon to showing me the pictures and talking of them to me. I liked him. He was so intense, so wildly glaring at times and so tearful at others. I had never seen any one before who dared to let himself go. When I pleaded that I must tear myself away if I caught my train, he put both hands on my shoulders and almost embraced me.

"Gott bless you!" he exclaimed. "You haf a nople soul!"

And I give you my word that the real basis of this encomium was naught but the fact that I had let him talk to me uninterruptedly about a subject in which he was, heart and soul, wrapped up. The perfect listener is always a "noble soul." I was, as a matter of fact, uplifted by the old German's discourse; for there was about him something distinguished and inspired, which was quite unaffected by the traces of beer and pretzels on the rounded front of his threadbare waistcoat.

his laughter; but Dick tried to spoil the humor of the thing by explaining that there were some alleys or something of the sort which strangers were in danger of mistaking for streets. This, however, was what is now known as bunk. Then he went out with me to show me something interesting. It was a tombstone in St. Paul's Churchyard just around the corner—a brownstone tombstone erected back in the seventeenth century.

To the Memory of Sidney Somebody, Carved by Himself.

"Whether that means that he carved himself or the tombstone," said Dick, "is left for posterity to discover. But look at the verses!"

"Ha, ha, Sidney! Liest thou here?" "Yea, here I lie
Till Time hath flown to its extremity!"

These were the verses. I wonder if the crumbling stone stands there yet. I have often promised myself that I would go look, but never have done so. Sidney's ha, ha at the jest of fate in expecting him to lie in peace in Manhattan Island till time hath flown to its extremity—if that was really the humor in the thing—impressed me more deeply than almost anything else I saw on that visit. Not more deeply than the Anton Seidl orchestral concert which I heard at Coney Island, however—my first evening of Wagner. I have never felt such delight in any concert since. Next to these was the mysterious yet pregnant quiet of Battery Park at one in the morning, when I went to take the Elevated train up to Forty-second Street, the loneliness of the Elevated platform as the train I missed went sweeping out of the station, and the mar-

vel of the effect of the pulse of the great city which filled it with the human corpuscles of its blood stream before the next train came in. There may be self-revelation in the fact that these were the things I remember most vividly.

Something I meant to mention apparently almost slipped my mind. Of course, I went to Syracuse and visited Ella Corey. In fact I stopped off going and coming. I exhibited myself as a full-fledged lawyer, armed with letters of marque and reprisal, and licensed to get all the clients found unclaimed. I shall not enter into particulars. Those who know need no information, and those who do not must be left to their experiences. Before I left, it was agreed that the next time I came I should take Ella away with me.

I read the other day of a man in Italy who bet that he could leap into the river from a height of a hundred feet with an uncooked egg in his hand and emerge uninjured, with the egg unbroken. He did it and won his bet; but the authorities took him into custody for examination as to his sanity. Ella's engagement was not so spectacular a matter; and our standards of insanity seem to be lower than those of Italy, so she was not subjected to any annoyance by the authorities. Her risk was not a whit less than that of the adventurous Italian; for she knew that we had no money; that I had never had a client and that I was planning to take her to Sioux City, where I had no friends or business connections. Yet she was willing to take the chance. As for me, I have no excuses to offer. I enter a plea in confession and avoidance. I did it; but I was younger then—and did not know that the thing could not be done.

CHAPTER XXXV

I BECOME A LOBBYIST

In the session of the Iowa Legislature of 1899-90 there was much activity in legislation regarding text-books in the public schools. A movement was inaugurated for the publication of the text-books by the state. Senator Matt Parrott of Waterloo was, I believe, the sponsor of this measure in the legislature. He was the owner of a newspaper in Waterloo, and a printing establishment; and whatever may have been his relation to the bills introduced for state-publication, it was generally understood that the Parrott printing interests were expected to get the contract for the printing of the books. I know as to the opinion of insiders; but nothing as to the actual facts. It is possible that the senator had no such idea at all.

Major Clancy, whom I had met at the Spirit Lake conference where I failed to sweep the meeting with my oratory, immediately went into action at Des Moines in the interests of the schoolbook publishers. It was a conflict between two selfish interests—the one seeking a law under which it might manufacture books for the schools; the other struggling to prevent its books already in use from being thrown out. The interests were not small, either. When one computes the magnitude of the sales to the people of such a state as Iowa when all schoolbooks are involved, it is really enormous.

Now as an educator, I was strongly opposed to the state-publication scheme. I could not visualize any result except a great deterioration in the quality of the text, and of the books themselves. I believed in competition, in giving each school board the chance to select the books which seemed best. But I had accepted the notion that it would be better in every way if the text-books were furnished free to the pupils by the school systems. I knew the vexations and troubles of teachers, pupils and parents when new books were called for by the progress of the children in the schools. I imagined a state of things under which the school would have a supply of books always on hand, bought at wholesale, and therefore at a lower price. When a child needed a new book, the teacher would walk into the store-room, take out the book required, hand it to the child, and file the old book for future use by some other pupil. I wrote rather tellingly on this theory. I think Major Clancy must have had his attention called to my outgivings; for one day I received a request from him, through what avenue I have forgotten, to come down to Des Moines. He had the idea that a "free-text-book" agitation might be a perfectly good red herring to draw across the trail of the state-publication fox. The simile is defective—but you know what I mean, I hope.

So I went to Des Moines, and became a member of the schoolbook lobby, and I believe I was paid the stupendous sum of a hundred dollars or something like that, in addition to my expenses. I saw the major a year or so ago in the lobby of the Auditorium Hotel in Chicago, and tried to hail him to renew our acquaintance of the long ago; but he escaped. I wanted to ask

him if he wasn't ashamed of underpaying me in that way. He might have retorted that what he did give me was sheer waste of his employers' funds. I haven't the slightest idea as to what good, if any, I did to the cause of the book publishers. I only know that I wrote much free-text-book gospel, and that Major Clancy saw to it that it had circulation. It was "Professor J. H. Quick" whose formidable name was signed to these articles. It was very exciting, to live at a good hotel, to have nothing to do but write, and to look at interior views of the lobby. Ed Hunter was there as a matter of course; but I do not believe he was in our crowd. Ed was shock troops anyhow, and was not often called into action save to hold the last line of defense, or carry a key position. I saw how wine, women and song were used, even in staid old Des Moines, to do their part in lining up the votes of the legislators. In fact, though I missed much, the lobby has never been a mystery to me since.

When I left the major he gave me a letter of introduction to Senator Joseph S. Lawrence of Sioux City, to be presented when I went to that town to open a law office; and this letter was a really potent matter in what I am pleased to call my destiny.

Did I not feel degraded, you may ask, by this avocation of a lobbyist? Not in the least, so far as I remember. I was associating with agreeable people, was seeing new things, was learning much, and was being paid, oh, so lavishly! for writing what I had been expressing for a long time because I believed in what I was saying. I was not at all ashamed. I really do not see even now why I should have been. And then, there is the tendency of all human beings to become

proud of the work they do. It is one of the most wonderful provisions of nature for keeping the world going. To be sure, when this pride is aroused by excellence in highwayman-ship, or gambling, or in that ancient profession in which Tolstoi tells us *Maslova* took so much pride, the net result is bad; but what a great thing it is that a man can feel proud of a well-planned board, a car adjusted so that it eats the road, or any well-done job!

CHAPTER XXXVI

I SEE A GREAT LIGHT

THERE be those called teachers who say to us that the villages, towns, and when the full truth is told, the cities, are almost without witnesses as to the great things of the spirit and the intellect. As for the rural regions, they instruct us, they are lost, as a matter of course. Does not "pagan" mean "paganus" which being interpreted meaneth a countryman? Brethren, it's a sad tale, this description of this world. Now Mason City is one of these lost towns in which the aspiring soul expires merely, or runs away to Lower Manhattan and spends its time running around, a merely spiral soul with more of its kind. But here is what happened to me in Mason City, Iowa, which I take it is another name for Gopher Prairie.

It was before I was admitted to the bar, I know; but just how long before I have no way of telling. Reverdy Miller, a young man reared in the town and educated in the colleges of the state, was one day when I came upon him, reading a thick paper-bound book.

"I was looking for some one to give this to," said he, handing it to me. "Take it and read it."

I looked at it with contempt; for it was a book greatly reprobated in the crowd with which I had been training; a book never read by those who con-

demned it; a book already known in most civilized lands, and often answered. It had been published for some years. I ranked its author with the two awful examples of destroying heterodoxy of those days, Herr Johann Most, and O'Donovan Rossa. Who of my readers remember those two disturbers? Few, of course, but they loomed large as agents of coming cataclysm then. This book handed me by Reverdy Miller, and the man who wrote it, were in my opinion as bad as Most, Rossa and their writings. Yet I took it and read it.

From childhood I had read everything I could find dealing with the structure of society. Analysis of institutions was familiar to me. I was not widely read on these subjects, and much of my reading had been rather inferior stuff, like the greenback propaganda of my teens, and the partisan outgivings of the days when I took as correct what the Republican orators and writers sent out. The best of my readings had been the compositions of the fervent minds of the abolition era—Wendell Phillips, Lowell, Whittier, Emerson and their contemporaries. These were strong morally and weak economically. These were not economists—we had no "sociologists" then—but reformers. All of them but Phillips had accepted the Republican Party as the Lord's Anointed, and in so far as they continued to think on social matters, had become conservatives and reactionaries. They thought the crusade for national righteousness ended when the slaves were freed. Phillips knew better; but even James Russell Lowell settled down in the belief that his eyes had seen the glory of the coming of the Lord, and there was nothing more to do. When

Miller handed me that paper-bound book, my mind was in agreement with those of the poets and apostles of the pre-Civil-War period who were still living. I had no desire to read the works of a mischief-maker and disturber; but I took pride in having an open mind, and possessed a curiosity as to what the fellow had to say.

The preface, dated November, 1880, while its sweeping generalizations rather took away my breath, was so calm, so quiet, so free from that blatancy which marks the howl of the demagogue that I went on to the Introduction, entitled "The Problem" with half my hostility removed. This man appealed to thought rather than to passion. But in the introduction, I began to feel the swell of a suppressed fervor, and I sensed the confidence of the writer in the fact that he had attained to truth. He spoke calmly of the failure of political economy as then taught to explain, to say nothing of proposing a remedy for, the social evils which every one could see. This failure he urged came not from the inability of the human mind to solve the problem, but from false steps in the various more or less accepted explanations. "And," he concluded, "as such mistakes are generally concealed by the respect paid to authority, I propose in this inquiry to take nothing for granted, but to bring even accepted theories to the test of first principles, and should they not stand the test, freshly to interrogate facts in the endeavor to discover their law. I propose to beg no question, to shrink from no conclusion, but to follow truth wherever it may lead. Upon us is the responsibility of seeking the law, for in the very heart of our civilization to-day women faint and little children

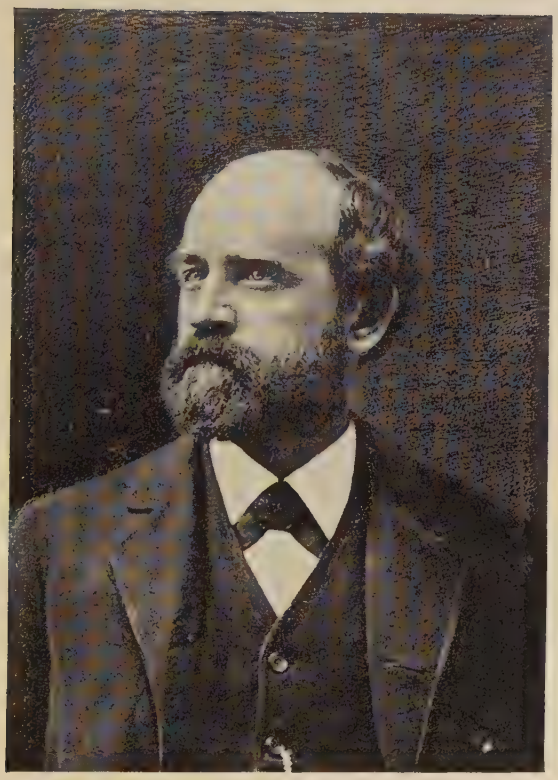
moan. But what that law may prove to be is not our affair. If the conclusions that we reach run counter to our prejudices, let us not flinch; if they challenge institutions that have long been deemed wise and natural, let us not turn back."

What could be fairer, nobler, or bolder than this; and fairness, boldness and nobility thrilled me. I plunged into the book and read until I had finished it. The writer was Henry George, and the book was *Progress and Poverty.*

I have often wondered whether many men have passed through such an experience as mine in the reading of this book. I found the very foundations of my philosophy in the process of dissolution. Like the foundations of the Cathedral of St. Paul's, they turned out to be nothing but sand and rubble, and the structure of conviction and theory so dear to me was tottering to its fall; but the book did not destroy alone. It poured into the rotten base the concrete of a new and perfectly correlated doctrine, which has stood firm and unshaken ever since. But these foundations of belief which were moving, dissolving and undergoing reconstruction, were those of my very life. The dome which was trembling was that of the convictions which I had publicly proclaimed before my little world. Consistency is a very precious jewel, especially to him who even in a modest way has been a speaker and a writer; and I saw that if these were veritable truths which I was drinking in, I should be forced to repudiate my doctrines which I had held, and which constituted the bond between me and many dear friends. I was facing a crucial test of character, or I was being misled.

I struggled hard against conversion. Surely, I said to myself, there must be some error in this man's logic, some sophistry which I could not detect. I saw the power of his presentation, and felt the charm of his style. I knew that my mind was at close grips with an intellect of the first order, moved by an apostolic fervor. I said to myself in effect, that if this were really truth, I should be a lost soul if I rejected it; for it was not only a call to the discipleship of truth, but the most completely redemptive truth ever set before the world. It was true that all history was strewn with the wrecks of civilizations. It was true that progress had always been associated with growing poverty. It was true that all civilizations which had possessed the power of protecting themselves against destruction from dangers from the outside, had eventually rotted from within. It was true that the increase of wealth had been accompanied by the increase of poverty in America.

And here was an analysis of the factors which were not only at work in our own society, but must inevitably have been at work all through history, which not only had produced the disease in the past everywhere, but must generate it in us as surely as decade should follow decade. Here was at last a perfectly plain and irrefutable exposition of the way in which wealth is distributed as it is produced. As every one has agreed, it fell into the divisions of interest, wages and rent; but George, for the first time, defined these three so that each included no portion of either of the others. He gave perfect definitions of interest, wages and rent. Then he showed that as rent increased with the increase of population, and the progress of the



Henry George, at the Time He Wrote *Progress and Poverty*, San Francisco, 1879.

arts and sciences, it is always subtracted, and must in the nature of things be subtracted, from the portions of wealth produced going into wages and interest.

He demonstrated that with land reduced to private possession, the economists before him had been correct in asserting that rent is measured by the superior productive capacity of any land in question, in site value in cities, and in farming value or the like in the country, over the least desirable land in use. In other words, rent depends upon the margin of cultivation, as Ricardo, Mill and others had said. But George showed that interest also depends on the margin of cultivation, as it must take its share of what is left after rent is satisfied; and that wages also depend upon it for the same reason. Thus the land question became the fundamental fact in economics as well as in sociology.

I was surprised to find here a reformer saying a good word for interest; but George proved not only the necessity, but the righteousness of interest. He showed that rent is at the expense of interest, and thus takes from capital a part of a larger share which it should have. But the crux of his demonstration lay in the proof that it is rent which crushes labor down to the returns from the poorest land in cultivation, and that this really means down to the smallest wage on which labor can live and reproduce. He was not content with the really mathematical demonstration of this. He proved it inductively, and deductively. He scanned history for evidence. He stated all the objections which have ever been made against his system in a stronger form than they have ever been stated by his opponents; and answered them before-

hand. And he proposed a remedy for the social disease of increasing poverty with the development of a civilization which was simple and just.

He showed that rent arises in the nature of things. No one is to blame for it. As land in a new society is occupied the superior land must bear rent. But rent comes, not from the labor of the owner, so far as the mere land is concerned; but from the progress of society. Hence, morally, it belongs to society. There this "unearned increment" of land values, in city and country, should be collected yearly by the government as belonging to the whole people. All public expenditures should be paid for with it. No one under such circumstances would hold land for any purpose except use, and he would pay only what the use was worth. All wealth produced by human activities would be untaxed. Nothing would be taxed save that which was created by the taxing power. Really the single tax would not be a tax at all, in the ordinary sense, since it would be merely a payment to the whole people for a benefit enjoyed. All titles would remain as now. There would be no disturbance of any occupation. Things would gradually readjust themselves. Wages and interest would rise to their proper level. The problem of poverty and want would be cured, and that without revolution. People freed from the trammels of a rigid land system could readjust themselves to any system of public order they might choose. Even the benefits claimed by socialism could be realized in so far as they might be realizable through voluntary cooperation, without the tyranny of state socialism. This is in a very sketchy form the vision which dawned on me as I read *Progress and Poverty.*

A perfectible society, and the obvious means of perfecting it. The ancient riddle of ruin solved at last. The abolition of involuntary poverty in view. Eternal racial life attainable for us of the end of the century, under terms of freedom, and with no need for revolution. I moved for days in a plane of exaltation such as I have never experienced before or since. I was uplifted to the skies. Again I suffered. It was the breaking up of the fountains of the great deep, and the opening of the windows of my spiritual heaven. I can not wish any young reader a better thing than some such experience. I have never for a moment since lost that something like a transformation which came to me then.

Of course no such book ought to have been given me by a young man born and brought up in Gopher Prairie; and no young man from a still more sordid plane of our lost and damned American life ought to have read it—not if we are to believe what recent pictures of such life depict. Yet Reverdy Miller gave and commended it to me, and I read it. And when I went back to him with a new light in my face, I suspect obscured by some clouds of doubt, and asked him if he believed what George had written, he said he did.

"Nobody can refute it," said he. "It's the real stuff!"

But I was not ready to take what he said as any strong buttress of a thing which must stand against every attack. He was a Democrat, for one thing, and I had a feeling that he had a weakness for the new and untried. So I went to Richard Montague, who had been our prize student in the Mason City High School, and had come back from the state university

trailing clouds of academic glory and a lawyer's sheepskin. He had a mind, the reaction of which it was worth while to get.

"Have you read *Progress and Poverty?*" I asked him.

"Yes," said he.

"What do you think of it?"

"It's the political economy of the future," he replied. "It is a discovery in the realm of thought. It's truth."

Then, even in Mason City, I had another mind to which I could appeal. I could ask Duncan Rule what he thought of it.

"I've been reading *Progress and Poverty,*" said I. "Have you read it, Dunc?"

"Yes," said he, "I've given it a pretty close study."

"What do you think of it?" I asked.

"Well," said Duncan, who unlike Miller and Montague had an official position to maintain, "it makes the other political economists look like infants. If you grant George's premises, you can't avoid his conclusions."

I sat a while in thought, weighing what he had said. These were men who did their own thinking, to whom I had appealed. They had seen nothing wrong with the book. I realized that in Rule's mind the doubtful point was not in the system itself, but in getting it applied.

"Well," said I at last, "I think I'm as good a judge of his premises as any one. It was his logical processes I was inquiring about. Anything wrong with them?"

"Not a thing!" said Duncan.

I don't believe I could have found more intelligent men anywhere with whom to confer on this matter of "weighing a philosopher and gauging a philosophy," than these three natives and lifelong residents of this little burg on the Iowa prairie. I have always found such men wherever I have gone. The writers who condemn our society for its lack of people of brain and vision merely describe what they have wished to find. The masses of our people are rich in every desirable human trait. All they need is a state of things calculated to bring these virtues to the surface, rather than to stunt and dwarf them. In this fact lies the hope of all our future.

As for the philosophy with which I became acquainted, a search of forty years for truth has never shaken my faith in its correctness, nor in the belief that it must be accepted, not only in America but all over the world if civilization is not to rot down into ruin as have those of the past. I have tried to find the answer to it; but there is none. I do not mean that I agree with Henry George in everything, but in every vital point in his system, I believe more strongly than ever. My experience as a man of affairs, and a student of world history as well as of sociology, has confirmed this faith. I have long since ceased to expect any progress of any consequence toward it in my time. At first I could not see how it could fail to win a great victory soon; but I made no allowance for the inevitable "drag" between the discovery of truth and its acceptance and adoption in human affairs.

And it may never be accepted. If not, our civiliza-

tion will not last, and the world, it seems to me, will be worse off than in past ages when dominant cultures have broken down through the conflict between the House of Want and the House of Have; for we can now see no fresh barbarians to come in and take our places. It may be that the last Great Experiment is now going on. It may be that in Henry George we have in America produced the mind which will make it a success. If there is any such thing as overruling guidance of our affairs, this must be so.

THE END